



GIACOMO CASANOVA



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*(From the painting by his brother, Francesco Casanova)*

# GIACOMO CASANOVA

Chevalier de Seingalt

BY

BONAMY DOBREE

*There are few more delightful books  
in the world than Casanova's Mémoires*

HAVELOCK ELLIS, *Affirmations*

WITH A FRONTISPIECE

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## PREFACE

CASANOVA's *Mémoires* have been debated as fiercely as any writings of the kind, both by those who regard them chiefly as a tissue of fiction, and by the others who defend their veracity. The question, however, is gradually being settled by eager scholars of many nations, and it would appear that where Casanova's statements can be checked, they are often found to be true. But while Casanova was writing his confessions he was between the ages of sixty four and seventy three, and though a multitude of notes and a prodigious memory enabled him to construct a coherent tale, he often muddled his dates, confused sequences, and misinterpreted facts. Therefore, in utilising his memoirs, I have corrected his most glaring misstatements according to recent research.

Frank as he was, he occasionally glozed over his past, he sometimes confessed to dubious dealings, but at other times concealed unpleasant facts. Perhaps his memory was kind

to him, but his critics have been more ruthless. Where it is impossible to check Casanova's statements—for even history cannot always draw the curtains of the bed—his story must, with reservations, be taken as it stands ; but here, though naturally he vaunted his prowess and spread his tail, there is no reason to be too sceptical : and though, no doubt, he often heightened his colours (after all, he was an artist, so much so that his work was once ascribed to Stendhal), we may gratefully accept his pictures. For if he could in his mind invent staggering improbabilities, as in his magical sabbaths, he could, and very probably did, equally well put them into effect. There was nothing within to stop him.

It is a thousand pities that we do not yet possess a full text of his autobiography. When it was first printed in 1826 in the French in which Casanova wrote it (there was an edition in German in 1822), many of the people he put on his canvas were still alive, and discretion was forced upon the publisher. Moreover, his French being Italianised, it was corrected by a Dresden professor, Jean Laforgue, who not only smoothed the style, but bowdlerised what he thought unprintable. Some scholars attack

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Laforge virulently, others, more tolerant, defend him. It is probable that we do not lose much in the rephrasing, and it is equally probable that no completely raw text will ever be published, for Casanova called things by their names, and it is odd that though humanity will accept facts, it is often horrified by words. But indeed Laforge's text does not leave much to the imagination. A more serious point is the considerable variation between the texts published by Paulin Rozez in 1860, and Garnier in 1879, the latter gaining in bulk, but at the expense of diffusion and declamation. Until we get an authoritative text, we must be content with the superb, magnificently illustrated, and annotated *Édition de la Sirène*, appearing from the hands of the most devoted Casanovians, led by M. Raoul Vèze, and based on the text of Laforge, with variants from the other editions.

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## I

## THE EDUCATION OF AN ADVENTURER

(1725-1716)

CASANOVA has no standing as an historical personage, but he has the magnitude of a great character in fiction. He exists, not by virtue of any effect he had on his time, but because he is the hero of a long, episodic, often lubric, and sometimes libellous novel. His autobiography is a romance which is sure to amuse whenever it is picked up, but its unique quality will appeal with its whole force only to those who can free themselves from prejudice, or whose interest in mankind is so lively as to overcome any repugnance they may feel at intimacy with a man completely devoid of suppressions. You must not blush when you read Casanova, or at most, like the Prince de Ligne, must blush only at finding that you are not doing so. For it is safe to say that Casanova had no complexes, not even that commonplace affair in inferiority-complex (unless the writing of his memoirs is tell tale), and no shame. How could he have? loving as he did the life which he lived intensely

as perhaps only a poet can live it, for an adventurer of his kind is a minor poet as well as a man of action, and lives by the imagination as much as by the body

He is valuable as a character in fiction for exactly the same reason that these persons have value, he is a distillation of something that exists in every one of us, not merely in his eminence as a procreative animal (for to attain that involves devotion to an activity that can easily pall, even in fancy), but rather of that something in us which bids us be free, to scoff at the restraints of society, to revolt against the maxim of 'safety first,' and against our own continual care of ourselves—that something which makes us wish that we were fairies, to come and go as we please, and whose actions can have little effect on anybody. Perhaps Casanova really was a fairy. Certainly, unless he is largely regarded as one he becomes preposterous, unbelievable, an offence against common sense. Otherwise he had no right to enjoy life so much, without remorse, and for so long. One of his earliest mentors had told him that *Sequere Deum* was the rule of life, by which he meant, 'Go wherever your impulse leads you; take whatever Fate offers, unless you feel a strong dislike for the gift,' and this advice Casanova followed to the end; it was almost his only principle; and since he

was blessed with a superabundant vitality, it led him into curious, exciting, and unholy places. He has, besides, that other necessary quality of the hero of a picaresque romance, he is likable, if not admirable. Moreover in life he had this winning quality, for whenever he told the truth about an adventure of his, not glozing over his own faults, he always found sympathisers, and made friends. and if this result was partly due to his grace in telling the tale, his skill survives in his artfully artless narrative. Infamous scoundrel! we will no doubt feel compelled to say, but then, as Volpone did to Mosca, we will cry out, 'My witty mischief, let me embrace thee!' There was so much more in his make up than the rogue.

Giacomo Casanova was the eldest son of a Venetian actor of Spanish descent, who died when his first born was eight years old, leaving him with two brothers, and a third to follow, besides two smaller sisters. Casanova the elder had established his wife as an actress, in spite of vowing that he would not, a profession which, with its prolonged absences in various capitals, gave her every opportunity for neglecting her family. The eldest of her brood began the life which he was to turn into a fantasy on April 2nd, 1725, but for his first few years he was a sickly infant, half idiot, suffering, he leads us to suppose, from over-richness of

blood, an inconvenience which time was to teach him how to allay, but which for the moment was eased, first by the incantations of a cat-attended sorceress to whom he was led by his maternal grandmother, and then by the visitation of a fairy who came down the chimney. His infancy was a blur in his mind, from which he could dredge up only an anecdote of how he managed with precocious skill to divert to one of his brothers a punishment due to himself. The child was father to the man. But then we have as an excuse that his reasoning faculty was dormant until the age of eight years and four months, when it suddenly awoke to reveal the complete natural philosopher. It was when his mother, with the family protector, the patrician Abbé Grimani, and Giorgio Baffo, famed for his erotic verses (was not his name derived from the island of Paphos, the land of Venus?), were taking him to be boarded out at a sort of infant school at Padua, in the hope of bettering his health. Travelling by river, Giacomo awoke in the morning to feel no motion, but to see the trees passing by the cabin window. 'Why!' he cried, 'the trees are moving!' 'You silly child,' he was told; 'it's not the trees, but the boat.' He thought a moment, and said, 'Perhaps, then, the sun does not move either; it is the earth turning

from West to East which makes it seem as though it did.' His mother and the priest mocked him for a dolt, but Basso, embracing him, exclaimed delightedly, 'You are right, my child, the sun does not move. Pluck up your spirits, use your reason, and let people laugh as much as they like.' Casanova was eternally grateful to Basso, but for him, he declared, his mind would have been blighted for ever, he would always have crouched under the yoke of a shameful credulity, whereas he now entered into possession of a faculty which, he confessed, had not taken him very far, but to which he owed all the happiness he enjoyed when he was so unlucky as to be lonely. Certainly his mind was never idle throughout his life, all through the *Mémoires* it peeps out as a sceptical and above all an inquisitive tenant of a boisterous body, it was an enquiring rather than a constructive mind, but extremely agile, and not altogether superficial. It was just the mind for a vehemently joyful, devil may-care adventurer, a mind ever alert, speculative, able at once to wander in uncharted seas, and to turn its discoveries to practical uses. Casanova was half a philosopher, no empty headed, rascally parasite and libertine, he was always eager to know things, especially himself. *Nequidquam sapit qui sibi non sapit*, a man who does not know himself does



not know anything—so he prefaced his *Mémoires*. and if, not being extravagantly introspective, he never attained a very profound knowledge in this, at least he cleared his mind of cant

The boy who had so unexpectedly discovered that he could think was put to board with a Slavonian woman at an establishment which he hated, where the provender was so meagre that, his mind not being of the kind that acts as a check, he learned to filch from the larder. For lessons he went to a Dr Gozzi, who, since he found his pupil intelligent, took him into his own house, and, while imparting a somewhat narrow religious doctrine, gave him a smattering of the sciences. There, in due course, Giacomo's education was developed in other ways by the doctor's young sister Bettina, a girl of thirteen, who instructed her charge in one of the more obvious branches of physiology, her teaching, however, going only so far as to excite his appetite for more knowledge without completing it. Nevertheless she succeeded in giving him the experience of jealousy (one of his elder comrades was bolder than he was), and also gave him the opportunity of witnessing several attempts at exorcism, for she became possessed of devils, of eleven thousand to be exact, owing to the machinations of a sorceress. These somewhat complicated the

amiable Bettina's intrigues, and Casanova had profound suspicions of the demons, especially as they seemed amenable to treatment only by a very good-looking young priest. However, in 1737, her nervous trouble was replaced by smallpox, of which she very nearly died, every one of the household was kept from her, except Casanova, who having already had the illness, tended her devotedly. As a result he caught the disease again, which, though mild, all the same left three marks upon his face.

Other sides of his education proceeded swiftly, already at eleven years old he had astonished the company and delighted Baffo by answering in a hexameter a Latin distich which, even veiled in the decency of a dead tongue, it is not decorous to repeat. He was destined for the law, though he wished to become a doctor, and very probably he would have made an admirable one, for not only would the profession have gratified his scientific turn, but, as he was to say later, the practice of medicine offers more scope for charlatanism than any other accepted way of life. But if he worked, as he seems to have done, he also played, falling in with a raffish set which taught him to gamble and to fight, and would have taught him to wench, but that he avoided the pitfall. According to his

account, the students of Padua were an intolerable set of ne'er-do-well swashbucklers, continually at odds with the police ; and Casanova, flourishing pistols and a carbine, banded himself with them. In this way he first began to read the book of life for himself, a thing which it is essential to do, for mere theories of morals are like the table of contents of a book, which will tell you what the book is about, but will not save you from the necessity of reading the volume. Sermons and precepts are all very well, but ' man is an animal who can learn only by his own experience,' he found, also he must test the warnings of the moralists to see whether they are valid. Thus once he was old enough to be let out alone he made the most of his opportunities, and some of the warnings did turn out to be true, for he was fleeced of his money, gambled on credit, and finally in 1739 had to apply to his grandmother for funds. She did not answer his appeal ; with admirable promptitude, she came and huddled him back to Venice.

Then began what is, perhaps, the most incongruous phase of Casanova's life : he became, of all unlikely things, an abbé, duly submitting to the tonsure, and receiving the three minor orders. No solemn or ascetic abbé, indeed, but a happy, idle, dandified

abbé of fifteen, his hair lightly powdered and scented with jasmine, which, though once cut off in his sleep by a severer churchman, was made all the more gracious by an expert barber sent by Senator Malipiero, who had taken the youth under his protection because he habitually ate as much as two people, and thus stimulated the appetite of the aged patrician. It was a fruitful protection for though Casanova continued his normal education, getting Horace by heart, requiring more than a veneer of Greek and a sound knowledge of other writers of antiquity (especially those who appeal most to curious youth), Malipiero did not think that was enough. He introduced the young abbé, precocious in body and mind, to the cultured society that frequented his house, and so the youth achieved a modicum of social polish, and learned how to talk. He liked being free of the Senator's luxurious table, and had no objection to the presence of a delightful girl of eighteen, Thérèse Imer, for the care of whom the old man reaped no reward but the dubious one of being able to ease his emotion in tears and abortive rages.

Soon Malipiero proceeded to launch the promising abbé in his career, and managed to have him nominated to preach a sermon, which, in spite of the opposition of the curate of the chosen church, Casanova insisted upon writing

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himself, consenting only to change the text from a Horatian titbit to one more congruous with the place, if unrelated to his theme. He learned his script up carefully, and delivered it brilliantly, indeed with such grace that the plate set aside for offerings to the preacher contained not only an inordinate number of sequins, but a quantity of billets-doux as well. Here, then, was the indubitable career for him. Casanova, the world-famous preacher. Full of confidence, he prepared his next oration too flimsily, and confused in the head by a luncheon where the wine had flowed liberally, he lost his thread, broke down physically, and had to be carried from the pulpit. Drowned in mortification, he bolted off to Padua for a few days to continue his legal studies, and never preached again. Thus revising his view of a career, he in due course mastered enough of the code to be received Doctor in 1742 (unfortunately there is no trace in the University Registers of this degree being granted him), but at that point he deserted the law. Not for him the dust and the routine, the excessive concentration of that arduous and sedentary profession, which, like Faustus, he regarded as fit only for a mercenary drudge. Better the Church than that: and after all, was he not marked out for it?

In the meanwhile he enjoyed Venice, at that

time one of the best towns in the world for pleasures, especially during Carnival, pleasures from which taking young abbés with perfumed hair were by no means excluded. It is not surprising that at his age, in that seductive atmosphere, Casanova began to feel the insidious attraction of the other sex, and to experience what was perhaps his last moral battle. *Sequere Deum*, yes, but where with us, temptations apart, it is often difficult to know exactly what is *Deus*, with Casanova it was always impulse, which in natures such as his is so strong as never to be misleading. *Deus* first manifested himself at Paseano, where Casanova was staying with some rich friends. There he was looked after in his room by a charming flowering girl called Lucie, brimful of life and the gaiety of life, adorned with as much fresh beauty as man could wish, and whose very innocence, whose virginal trustfulness, threw her into the arms of the boy abbé. He loved her, she declared her love for him, who could resist? But Casanova did resist. Heroic resolutions sustained him through white nights of struggle, reticences of youth to which, he confessed, fear of consequences lent support. But what perverse moral lessons does life not teach! A year later, going back to Paseano full of eagerness (for through experience he had lost his puerile fears), he found that a

fortnight earlier Lucie had vanished in company with a courier by whom she was with child. She was lost, irretrievably sunk—and it was all his fault! Had he quenched Lucie's fires, had he even allayed them, she would never have been seduced by this infamous courier. Casanova, who had been so proud of his conquest over himself, was now ashamed of his silly, of his fatal continence. He vowed that he would never repeat the offence, and immediately adopting 'a different system,' one from which he never departed (except once, when frightened), he seized the opportunity of being in a chariot with a lady alarmed at a thunderstorm to put it into practice.

For by then he was no longer innocent; he had tasted the joys which he was to pursue all his life till time brought about its doleful revenge. For during that year he had his first adventure, falling victim to the not very great charm of the niece of the churchman who taught him languages and philosophy. She, however, was inflexibly unkind; marriage was her goal. but she had two friends, Marton and Manette, sisters, daughters of people whom he visited. They were beautiful, of noble birth and considerable wit, who after a first trial cunningly contrived, found Casanova so delightful a companion that they gave him a wax impression of the key of the room they shared.

He did not love them, he did not pretend to love them, there was about this episode none of the spring freshness of his love for Lucie, none of the

Ab how sweet it is to love !  
Ah, how gay is young desire !

rapture it was merely, one would think opportunity. But then, at the age of sixteen love is not essential to enjoyment, and by the time Casanova returned to Pascano, he was thoroughly initiate, if not yet past master, in the mysteries of Venus.

By now he was already independent. His first visit to Pascano had been cut short by the illness and subsequent death of his grandmother, and his mother, established in the theatre at Dresden, had bidden the Abbe Grimani look after her family, and instal Giacomo in a furnished apartment she possessed. The daughters were otherwise lodged, and her second son François was apprenticed as pupil to Francesco Guardi, already famous as a punter. The other sons? Well, Casanova is always somewhat vague about these other brothers whom he disliked. Grimani was inadequate to the situation. 'I could never make out,' Casanova said, 'whether he was good because he was a fool, or whether the foolishness was part of his goodness.' At all



events he could not curb his eldest charge, and a crisis came when Casanova sold the linen and furniture to pay his debts and gamble. It was difficult to know what Grimani could do with this idle, unattached abbé, whose only serious occupations seemed to be occasionally to scribble an heretical thesis—such as the one which argued that any being of whom one could have nothing but an abstract idea could only exist arbitrarily—or to dabble in a diletante way with chemistry. Even his serious social occupation was gone, for the revered Malpiero having found his young protégé making unequivocal and unresented gestures to Thérèse Imer, had belaboured the young ecclesiastic with a stick, and cast him out of his house.

It is true that in the offing there was a monk about to be made a bishop, apparently if not very believably through the influence of Madame Casanova, and he was going to take charge of the youth. Casanova was delighted at the prospect. Here was the path to Church preferment, even, who knew? to the pontificate, so did his young fancy run away with him. But for the moment the bishop did not materialise, and in the mean time Grimani packed Giacomo off to a seminary. Casanova had no objection to this scheme, it appealed to his whim: but he fiercely resented the

entrance examination Was he not Doctor? He sulked was put among the small boys, but soon, by accident, the extent of his knowledge was discovered, and he was promoted to the senior class This matter had hardly been arranged, however, than he was expelled for an offence of which he declared himself before God to be innocent, and which, indeed, scarcely tallies with his predilection for the other sex Grimani promptly had him shut up in the fort of St Andrew There he was tolerably free, free enough at all events to escape for one night and rejoice in thrashing the man who, he thought, had injured him in Grimani's esteem, and to receive from another inmate of the fair sex an incommodity which mortified him For six months he endured this existence, which was not without its amenities, since he dined with the prison governor, then, shortly after his release, being once more installed at Grimani's table, he met his bishop, who gave him instructions for meeting in Rome, from which they would go together to his see in Calabria.

In good heart, full of ambition, with such a supply of clothes and money as to give confidence, Casanova set sail towards the end of 1743 The first stop was Chiozza, where the voyagers were to stay for a few days, an almost fatal few days For almost at once

the not yet subtle enough young abbé was fleeced of his money at faro ; and what was worse, having pawned all his clothes, he lost them too. This was enough to sink any youth to despondency, but what added to his grief was a second experience of a humiliating disease, for he had not yet got to the stage where he could say with equanimity (after twelve such illnesses), ‘ I have often observed that for the greatest part of my life I have been trying to make myself ill, and then, when I had achieved this, in trying to get well again I have been equally successful in both ; and now that, as far as that goes, I enjoy perfect health, I regret being unable to make myself ill but old age, an illness as cruel as it is inevitable, forces me to be well in spite of myself’ But now in his nonage his circumstances plunged him in despair. He suffered mental agonies which he never forgot, and was on the point of letting go every moral hold, of sinking into degradation and ignominy. He lay and groaned on the bed which he had been hospitably offered, and was only rescued from the pit by the sailor who came to fetch him on board. It was the severest crisis of his life ; but by the time he got to Ancona, where he was delayed by a quarantine, he had completely recovered. He made his way on foot to Rome, in

company largely with a scandalously predatory monk, who however, kept him in food, only to find that his bishop, tired of waiting, had gone on to Calabria. He pursued him to Naples, where a message had been left. Near Naples Casanova retrieved his fortunes by a dubious piece of chemistry which increased the volume of mercury (though it debased it), and selling this secret to a merchant, he proceeded, once more well equipped with clothes and money to join his bishop. Casanova liked this prelate, a worthy, pious, and educated man, but the see was a desert, the country, in Casanova's eyes, bleak, society non-existent. The bishop, shrewd and kindly, saw at once that the young abbé was not the assistant for him, and after three days they parted amicably, Casanova armed with an introduction to a grandee at Naples.

Naples was always kind to Casanova. He was petted, was given clothes and money by a cousin, became a figure in society, and was offered admirable posts in noble houses. But he refused all offers, asking only for recommendations in Rome, to which he travelled in company with an advocate, his wife, and his sister. With the wife, Lucrezia, he fell in love, and, favoured by the promiscuity incident to travelling in those days, achieved such

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progress that in Rome he was made happy. It was the first affair in which his heart had been engaged ; he was really in love, and his passion was returned. *Amour, je te remercie*, the couple cried simultaneously in their transport, and Lucrezia for ever retained a niche in the sentimental corner of Casanova's heart.

But such delights were only for moments stolen from a sterner system of education which he was undergoing with a subtle Abbé Gama, in whose charge he had been placed by Cardinal Acquaviva, and who, bidding him abandon such acquaintance as Lucrezia's family provided, revealed to him the mysteries of discretion, of dissimulation, and of pleasing, which make for progress in the Church. He also made him learn French. Casanova seems to have been attached in some secretarial capacity to the Cardinal's court, and he thrived, through his appearance, his wit, his diligence, and these, combined with a brilliance in scribbling verses, make him equally successful in the gatherings of cardinals and their ducal mistresses, in which he became more and more intimate. When he saw Pope Benedict XIV, he was quite at his ease with him, made him laugh, and extracted permission from him to read the books on the Index, and to treat fasts lightly, though neither grace was given in writing. It looked

as though he would thrive in the Church, more than one cardinal had his eye on him, the Abbé Gama felt his pupil was bringing him credit, but alas! just as the road to preferment seemed open, Casanova helped an eloping couple to escape the law and the Inquisition by harbouring the girl, disguised as an abbé, in his quarters. The affair made so much noise that Acquaviva was forced to part with his promising recruit, and asking Casanova what he would like to do, sent him on some vague mission to Constantinople to cover his expulsion from Rome.

It was unlike Casanova to have an unadventurous journey, and his transit to Venice, from which he was to sail for the Sublime Porte, provided matter as fantastic as it was unforeseen, apart from the amorous extravaganza interwoven with it. The journey involved a love affair with a ravishing Thérèse, a singer masquerading as a *castrato*, the loss of a passport, semi imprisonment, his sudden departure on a bolting horse he had innocently mounted, entering and leaving Rimini as a muleteer, and finally his casting away the cassock in favour of a smart blue and white, gold and silver officer's uniform of his own designing. Perhaps, after all, the Church was not the most glamorous career. The journey also involved a deal of philosophic thought and

introspection, but neither, though they taught him carefulness, weakened his impulsiveness, as was shown by his superb aplomb when his runaway horse was caught by guards and he replied to the question of where he was going so fast by saying he was carrying an urgent message to the governor of Rimini, and thus ensured his being sent to the town where Thérèse, or Bellino, then was. Introspection was prompted by Thérèse herself, who at the conclusion of this period, and while he was separated from her, wrote to say that she had been made a good offer by a Duke to appear at a Naples theatre, but that before accepting, she wished to offer Casanova the first refusal of her person and her future. Or, should she go to Naples and wait for him there? when he appeared, she would support him. 'For the first time in my life,' Casanova wrote, 'I found myself forced to think before making a decision . . . Two equally powerful motives held the balance even—self-love and love.' And, somewhat queerly, magnanimity entered into it. Had he the right to prejudice Thérèse's career, which, he foresaw, would depend more upon her charms than upon her talent? For he did not see himself in the rôle of complaisant lover or husband. Husband! the word had a horrid sound, especially at eighteen; besides, it would have meant abandoning the splendid

future for which he felt himself destined. And again, how could he bear the shame of appearing among his aristocratic friends at Naples as the kept husband of an opera singer? No! impossible!—and if he was enamoured, he was past the first fevered rapture in which one can renounce the world for love. So he advised her to go to Naples, where, no doubt, some day he would join her. Thérèse was disposed of.

Thereupon, in his new soldierly character, Casanova slipped through the quarantine, and appeared in his native town. Grimani was horrified, but Marton and Manette, with whom he lodged, were in ecstasies, and though his imagination was filled with Thérèse, he did not disappoint them. He was guilty of no inconstancy towards Thérèse, only of an infidelity, a pretty distinction he was careful to make. Venice on the whole was delightful, but since his career had to be seen to, he entered the Venetian army as an ensign, and was sent to Corfu, from whence he was granted leave to fulfil his 'mission' to Constantinople. This consisted merely in presenting a letter of introduction to Achmet Pasha, who as a Christian had been known as the Comte de Bonneval, one of Prince Eugene's famous generals, and who now as a Moslem was a noted diplomat. Casanova amused himself by making observations of Turkish manners, which was all there



was for him to do, since he stupidly missed a sole opportunity for an amorous intrigue, and then returned to Corfu. There, passing the time chiefly in gambling, and in making a little summer love, he became involved in a disciplinary misdemeanour, and to evade what he thought a humiliating punishment, he escaped to a neighbouring island, where he made himself for some time into a sort of bandit chief surrounded by faithful soldiery—for such the peasants became if sufficiently trained by largesse—but was eventually induced to return. Soon after, in 1745, he went back to Venice, where, disgusted at not getting the promotion he had been promised, and feeling that he was not built for a life of discipline, he threw up his commission.

Then for a while, after a brief experience in a lawyer's office, he became a complete rascal. He who had dreamed of being Pope, and had aspired to command an army, eked out a bare living by playing the fiddle in a theatre orchestra; a humiliating position for a Doctor of Laws, who from moving in the most dazzling society had thus sunk to be the companion of dire rascals. What a crew! They got drunk every night after the theatre, haunted brothels, roused honest citizens out of bed on false pretexts, cut bell-ropes, slipped gondolas from their moorings, sounded tocsins,

and even kidnapped terrified bourgeois, and into this life Casanova drew his brother François, now becoming a painter of battle-scenes. Such a life would inevitably have led to prison, complaints against this band of rogues were becoming too frequent but then Casanova had a stroke of luck which re-orientated his whole existence.

Leaving a festivity very late one evening, the violinist saw going downstairs a venerable red-robed senator, who in drawing out his handkerchief dropped a letter. Casanova hastened to pick it up, and, in thanks, the patrician offered to take the young man back to his lodgings in his gondola. They had hardly started when the senator was seized with an apoplectic fit. Casanova rushed in panic to find a surgeon, who at once bled the stricken man, Casanova tearing strips off his shirt to make bandages. The youth then took the invalid to his palace, another doctor was called, and Casanova quietly installed himself as nurse. It turned out that the senator was a certain Zuane Bragadin (more correctly Bragadino), who after the wild youth proper to a handsome man was now at the age of fifty-seven living a life of wisdom, in company with two old wisecracks, Messieurs Dandolo and Barbaro. These, the next evening, told Casanova he might go if he had

business elsewhere, but the young man sententially replied, 'I will stay here to-night by the bed ; for if I go the patient will die, whereas if I stay I am sure he will live' The friends were staggered by this assurance, and Casanova stayed. Moreover, his prophecy proved true. For during the night the invalid began to suffer agonies from a mercury poultice the doctor had placed on his chest, in some way it was suffocating him. Casanova at once roused the friends and said that it was essential to remove the ointment, and he did so, washing the chest with warm water. The patient forthwith revived. When the doctor bustled in betimes the next morning he was overjoyed to see his patient so well, but furious when he found what had been done. 'Doctor,' Bragadin said, 'the man who relieved me of the mercury is a physician who knows more of medicine than you do,' and he indicated Casanova. Both doctor and amateur were astounded ; it was all Casanova could do to keep his face, but with his magnificent presence of mind he at once stepped into the position. The doctor, of course, resigned the case, Casanova took charge, and sensibly recommending a low diet, improved the occasion by laying down the law, and quoting medical authorities whose works he had never read. Bragadin and his friends were in raptures over the young

man, the senator indeed declaring that he could not at his age know so much unless he had supernatural aid. The suggestion appeared brilliant to Casanova, and with inimitable swiftness he mounted to the top of the situation. He confessed that he had indeed some acquaintance with the occult sciences, more, he had a familiar, an oracle, who would answer questions put to him. In fact, it was owing to this oracle that he had been on the steps when Bragadin had dropped his letter. In illustration of his necromantic skill, he proceeded to erect pyramids of numbers. 'Why, this is Solomon's Key,' Bragadin cried, 'what the vulgar call the Cabbala,' as he listened to the answers which Casanova produced, extracting at will replies either clear, ambiguous, or unfathomably mysterious. 'Where,' Bragadin asked in tremulous delight, 'had he got his knowledge?' 'Oh,' Casanova answered readily, 'from a hermit.' The three preposterous old men fell into the trap, craving as they did for something more esoteric than the Christian religion, in which they implicitly believed because they found it all quite natural. Thus Casanova became their joy. his oracle, called Paralís in the family circle, was their mentor, and soon they would do nothing without the young man's advice. Bragadin made him a son of

the house, clothed him, fed him, made him a handsome allowance What could be better ? Casanova had not the heart to undeceive them ; he fooled them to the top of their bent

‘ I was not quite open and above-board with them,’ Casanova confessed : but then, what was he to do ? Would not Bragadin have died but for him ? Could he be so mean as to leave them all in the lurch ? And besides, they were such obviously easy prey, that if he did not cheat them, some one else would. It was his duty to go on, he felt ; it would be unpardonably rude to tell them they were silly dupes, and then leave them ; it would not cure them of their folly. Besides, pride forbade him to avow himself unworthy of their distinguished friendship. ‘ It seems to me,’ he wrote in his unregenerate old age, ‘ that I chose the better part, the most noble, the most natural ’ After all, he was twenty-one, and full of high spirits ; the situation promised an infinity of fun And it gave him a position in the world, besides securing him from poverty And if the world puzzled its head as to how three venerable old men could give countenance to a notorious rakehell, it was no business of his Thus Casanova, if not settled in life, was at least provided with a base from which to conduct those operations which fill us with amazement, and seem at times incredible.

## II

### VARIOUS FACETS

FATE, it is clear, had arranged to give an unshackled temperament just the education, just the introduction to life, to form a prince of adventurers, cherished by Fortune in a shape 'which offered him no temptation to tread the paths of moderation and prudence' He was an apparition, who for the next forty years was to make more or less dazzling descents upon all the capitals of Europe, to astound all classes from king to beggar, being equally at home (like death's dancing feet) in palace or tavern, a companion who could amuse men of intellect such as Voltaire and Winckelmann, debating with them on level terms, keep a cultured dinner table in roars of laughter, or divert a collection of crooks In honour with statesmen, he was treated with respect by rascals as master of their own crafts Living most of the while in luxury, travelling like a *grand seigneur*, sometimes he would occasionally have to eke out a pittance in a garret at some times looked upon as a man of power, at others in prison, he raided

all Europe, now in the guise of a bird of paradise, now as a hungry tiger restlessly seeking whom or what he might devour. He was never still for long. Urged by the need to find new fields to display himself in, but impelled at least as much by curiosity, he could not bear to stay any length of time in one place. Fresh manners and customs, new books and old manuscripts, works of art, antiquities, and especially different people, these lured him on : and if he was sometimes expelled from the places he graced, he never minded setting out again on his travels.

Of Herculean build, they said, very tall, unusually strong, capable of athletic feats as well as of Gargantuan meals, he could impose, by a happy swagger, on any company. Yet he was no Adonis. His complexion, dark brown in his youth, became 'African' as he grew older, while certain initial roughnesses, smallpox marks and scars, deepened with the years. A high receding forehead, a long aggressive nose edged with an inquisitive nostril, a lover's mouth, and a soft chin falling away to a bull neck, do not seem to constitute the most fascinating of masks. But fascination does not reside in formal beauty, and his eye has yet to be taken into account, a large, rapacious, black-lashed eye, a little protuberant under brows arching outward, a

light lidded eye in which the iris seems to be set low down. It could flash, it could soothe, could warm to love, could freeze to fear. But it was in the whole man rather than in the face alone that the power lay. He seemed to radiate energy, to be imbued with magnetic attraction. Abundantly vital, his strength promised generosity, his gaiety kindliness, in spite of a vestige of hardness. Perhaps he was over-confident, over assured, sometimes explosively so, but then he was permeated by a belief in his good genius, his *esprit familial*, which though it sometimes betrayed him, usually prompted him for his good. It inspired and advised him, steeled his will, gave him infinite resilience, and, most significant of all, rid him of scruples. His social talents were enormous. Not only was he a good talker, overflowing with unusual knowledge, a born orator, a poet able to quote poetry inexhaustibly, and, since he was moved to tears while he quoted, able to move his hearers, an inimitable story-teller, but, being agog with curiosity, eager to pick up knowledge of men or things, he was a good listener. And this is a quality that makes for popularity.

Talents, sensibility, physical courage, and a personality which attracted numerous friends—and made a few implacably bitter enemies—to what end, we ask, did he use these precious



gifts? The answer is, to living, which, with him, meant principally loving, for he had early discovered that his mission in life was to be, in his own phrase, a votary of Venus. Abnormally endowed with procreative gifts—he has been described as ‘a sexual athlete’—he never lost an opportunity of being on intimate terms with a woman, of any age or class, so long as she had charms. It was his supreme bliss, it never palled, though he confessed that as he grew older he became less delicate, and no longer experienced the delicious excitement of his early adventures. How should he, indeed? But he was no mere animal. It is true that he was sometimes led into venal relations, orgies to which as a rule he was incited by others, but he obtained no pleasure unless his companion (or companions) felt it too. He would have no grudging acquiescence; the idea of force horrified him. Without sympathy, without real attraction on both sides, to act the beast with two backs (he was fond of the Shakesperian phrase) meant nothing to him. First attracted by a woman’s face, he would be enraptured by her conversation, her wit, till his passion was inflamed. Or so it seemed to him; but perhaps after all he did not know himself very well. Sometimes he seems to have loved wholly, with delicacy and con-

stancy, he never ceased to have warm feelings towards a woman he had really loved. But his peculiar kind of constancy did not preclude his loving others at the same time, the appearance of any new beauty at once aroused his concupiscence. He panted to possess every one whom he found attractive, and was delighted with every one he conquered. All had peculiar beauties, not one of them, in his own favourite term, but could have served as model to Praxiteles.

Had you asked him if he never wearied of the diversion, he would have stared at you and asked in return if you ever got tired of reading books? All books were much the same, and so were all women, but just as every book is unique, so is every female creature. Declared bibliophile in both sorts, he made the comparison at length. Women, like books, must first attract by the title page, which is to be read from top to bottom, and just as the real amateur of women takes as great a delight in the feet as in the face (he was something of a fetishist as regards feet), so the bibliophile appreciates the printer's name at the bottom of the page. He is taken with the outside, then he wants to read the book. 'Moreover, just as great readers seize upon any fresh book, good or bad, so the curiosity of a man who has known many women, all

lovely, is aroused about even ugly ones, when they are quite fresh to him . . . the work may be better than the title-page suggests' Habit, curiosity, then, as much as anything else, impelled Casanova to his continual conquests, as well as the urgency of his overheated temperament. Indeed it became with him a question of self-respect. Not to have offered to seduce a woman who came his way would have been to fail in his mission as a high-priest to Venus: indeed it became his duty to seek out sacrifices to offer on the altar of love. Thus his course throughout Europe is marked by scores of Paphian rites of which only a trifling percentage can be mentioned here; everywhere over the Continent were to be found women not only whom he had adored, but who had adored him. Love was his happiness, he followed it, he sought it out wherever he could. More than anything else, if pleasure was his aim, love was his profession.

Moralists habitually condemn the pursuit of happiness, though what else man does in his multifarious activities it is hard to determine. There are, of course, many ways of obtaining happiness—in asceticism, in devotion to hard tasks, in power, in self-sacrifice, in the search after truth, in abandoning one's self to the will of God—and moreover it is fairly clear that to pursue the obvious, easy

happiness by direct means is to court failure. Indeed man is so complex that he often has to perform the most intricate evolutions, undergo the most rigorous mental discipline, before he can be even contented, for it is hard to know in what, precisely, happiness consists. But Casanova suffered no mental tortures, happiness for him lay in obedience to impulse, in the immediate gratification of the senses—not excluding the senses of the brain and the delight of intellectual mastery—and his nature was so simple, so direct, even abnormally so, that he asked for no spicing to the dish, though indeed he was not averse from a little danger, a touch of mystery, a hint of secrecy, at any rate a trifle of difficulty. But that was all. Baudelaire's remark that the single and supreme delight of love lies in the certainty that one is doing evil would have been incomprehensible to him, for he had no atom, not the smallest residue of a sense of sin in making love. He experienced none of the delicious fears of the unknown, that 'panic terror of consequences which might disastrously affect the future, for alas, 'an ill philosophy lessens what we call prejudices to too small a number'. He pursued the obvious easy happiness as directly as he could, and the astonishing truth is that he caught it.

Money counted for nothing with him. It

was meant to spend, lavishly, to obtain the best food and drink (and plenty of both), consideration from other mortals, splendid clothes, and love. For even when he does not buy his loves, a man must be set out in a certain way to be attractive to women ; he must be able to afford to do amusing and expensive things, to shower unexpectedly lovely gifts on them, and above all, to be in a position to make sacrifices . Money meant living splendidly, and what was the good of living at all if one merely dragged through a sober, honest, and industrious life ? Moreover, the world was like a kaleidoscope, full of gloriously coloured interesting things and people , the only difference was, that whereas a kaleidoscope revolves before you, you yourself had to do the revolving through a static world . And travelling, especially travelling in dashing style, needs money

Casanova, then, got money. He was sure of never starving, for the good Senator Bragadin would see to that ; but money from that source was the merest insignificant percentage of what he needed . His main fount of revenue throughout his life was gambling ; he hated, he declared, to spend money not obtained in that way ; but once his pockets were full, he scattered their contents broadcast, in clothes, jewelry, horses and chariots, in meals that

would have gratified both Lucullus and Trimalchio, in orientally princely gifts to women, and in generosity to servants which staggered the recipients. He made many poor families happy, from vanity indeed rather than from virtue, though it gave him pleasure to make people rejoice, and he often gave, not lent, large sums to fellow adventurers who were not so lucky as himself. But if he gambled to get money, he also gambled for love of the game—it was in his blood. He confessed that he could not live without it, could not resist punting at faro, his most usual game, though he preferred to keep the bank, as the odds were in its favour. He could not even always stop playing when his better judgment told him he should, and thus, sometimes beginning the evening a rich man, he would end it desolate. After all, gambling was part of his philosophy of life, indeed, life as he saw it was nothing but a gamble—but the way the cards are shuffled is predestined. Of course, as a Christian (for such this arrant pagan thought himself) he did not believe in Fate, yet it is extraordinary how often the word Destiny occurs in his memoirs. There was something which ruled the ways of men, as it did the fall of cards, for time and again he did things which according to all reason were follies and should have led to dire results, but which turned out

happily ; while, on the other hand, actions he had undertaken after hours of prudent thought had led to disaster . the sad story of Lucie of Paseano was a case in point Clearly there was a Providence which ruled the affairs of men Who were they, poor mortals, to attempt to govern their ends ? *Sequere Deum* Thus Casanova took to the faro table all the boldness, the faith in providence, that he carried with him elsewhere. He was an incomparable player, cool, alert, never betraying himself by his face, which even when he was losing heavily radiated enjoyment in the game He never cheated—not seriously—cards were far too deep a passion with him, and was always hot against those who ‘corrected fortune,’ though indeed, if he never himself tampered with the cards, he did not mind on occasion going halves in a bank with those who did. As far as cards went, he piqued himself on being a man of honour. And his luck was amazing Again and again he would break the bank ; time after time he would, as banker, retire with his pockets bursting not only with gold, but with notes and bills of exchange Fortune smiles on those who are not afraid of her, and whose nerves are of iron.

Once, however, it was not a question of nervous, but of physical endurance. At Sulz-

bach, in 1762, he lost a trifling sum at piquet to a certain Entragues, who offered him his revenge 'I am not very eager for it,' Casanova answered, 'for I play for the fun of it, and you play to win'

'You insult me.'

'I did not mean to but every time we have played, you have stopped after about an hour'

'You ought to be grateful to me for that, since not being up to my standard, you would have lost a lot of money'

'Perhaps, but I don't believe I should'

'I can prove it'

'Very well but whichever of us stops playing first will forfeit fifty louis'

They began to play at three o'clock At nine Entragues suggested supper 'I'm not hungry,' Casanova said, 'but of course you can go away if you want me to pocket the stakes' No more was said The spectators went to supper, and came back to watch, leaving the gamblers to themselves at midnight. At six the water-drinkers congratulated them, at nine the combatants were persuaded to drink some chocolate, at four, a little soup At supper time it was suggested that they should divide the stakes, but Entragues being well ahead in winnings, Casanova would not consent. So on they played, all through



the second night, Casanova, less collapsed than his rival, winning back his losses. At about nine o'clock it was suggested they should give over : but now Entragues would not. Soup was given them, but this was the end of Entragues. Tottering from his chair, yellow as a corpse, pouring with sweat, he fainted. After forty-two hours' play Casanova had a refreshing sleep, and unlike his rival, who did not recover for some days, appeared his usual radiant self at three-o'clock dinner.

But gambling, sponging on Bragadin, and once for a short time more or less honestly earning money, as we shall see, were not Casanova's only sources of revenue. There was magic, a theme which runs like a ribbon through the memoirs, by means of which he caused extraordinary sums of money to flow from the coffers of his dupes into his own leaky pocket. A good memory, amazing mental agility in erecting pyramids, a shrewd insight into men—and women—a fund of common sense, and a certain amount of esoteric medical knowledge, were his weapons ; but beyond these aids he was acquainted with the recondite erudition of the cabbalists, knowing enough to impose on others, though, as befits a scoffer, his learning was not much more than superficial. And besides, he had astonishing good luck. Normally he professed himself utterly sceptical,

especially where the work of other magicians was concerned, but ever and anon things turned out so oddly that he wondered if there were not something in it—he would find himself making unlikely prophecies which came true! Once a slip he made in drawing the numbers led to an answer which alarmed him by its recklessness, but which led to the happiest results when acted on—and sometimes the sediment of superstition he was never able to rid himself of, would swell and possess him. How could he not believe when things happened so pat? Why, even at the very end of his life, had he not found himself stating that a certain pregnant cat would have six black kittens, and had she not done so? 'There are more things in heaven and earth'—he was fond of quoting. If he knew that Paralus was a fraud, he still felt that he had a familiar that prompted him. Thus, to the lover, the gamester, the wit, the man-of-the-world, the student, the charlatan, and the poet, must be added as a constant ingredient the make-believe sorcerer who half-believed in his own spurious magic.

### III

## THE FIRST ODYSSEY

(1746-1753)

CASANOVA's lucky adoption made no difference to his moral being ; it merely gave him extra advantages as a gay young rascal ; for those who wanted anything from Senator Bragadin found that the easiest path to his good graces was through this tall, handsome, giddy, and perhaps rather flashy young inter-loper. Life was obviously a superb affair, and Casanova squeezed the utmost out of its joys, made love, gambled—at this stage too avariciously—fought a duel in which he pinked his man, and altogether behaved as though existence were one long Venetian Carnival, with as much significance as a *Commedia dell'Arte* farce.

There were one or two little disagreeables to add flavour to what might have been too sweet a dish, such as a charge of assault which he was able easily to rebut , for though he had indeed given a girl a sound drubbing with a broomstick, she had refused him her favours after he had compensated her mother

for the loss of a trifling toy There was also an affair, while he was staying in a merry prankish house not far from Venice, in which the general feeling was, he could not understand why, against him. He had merely taken a mild revenge on a man who had treacherously tumbled him into a muddy ditch, by presenting him in bed, in the dark, with a hand and arm which he had hacked off a corpse buried that afternoon ! The man was prostrated, and never fully recovered his reason , there was a terrific to-do, and Casanova was howled back to Venice, assured that a charge of blasphemy would follow him there Pooh ! Absurd ! they couldn't prove anything and that was as far as the episode seemed to affect him. Remorse ? Well, he was sorry , but after all, the trick the man had played him might have killed him, so they were quits The story, true or not, and Casanova wished it thought true, grimly reveals the basis of savagery upon which the social Casanova was built. He could see nothing loathsome in the horror he had perpetrated , it was not among his prejudices to respect a corpse any more than a living man , but even so, might it not have revolted the fastidiousness of most good livers, most epicures or Lotharios ? To do such a thing from passion, or from half-madness, as Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi*

did, is understandable ; but for a sane young man to do it for a joke is, to say the least of it, abnormal. He, no doubt, would have argued that it showed supreme health, superiority over a sense of the gruesome, freedom from the nonsense of superstition. But at all events it was religious desecration, and Bragadin advised him to fly ; all would be arranged in a year or so. Those are the reasons Casanova gave for his abrupt departure early in 1748 ; but it appears that he was about to be charged with magic practices, and that he fled to escape the Inquisition

No warning, however, could deter Casanova from doing anything that suggested itself to his madcap mind, and within a few weeks he was deeply engaged in the first of many fantastic sorceries. Some gullible old fool, who thought he owned the knife with which St. Peter had sliced off the ear of the soldier, had told him of a fortune buried near Cesena ; and Casanova, who saw here a chance of unlimited fun (and of extracting a little money from the superstitious buffoon), egged him on, and elected himself magician in chief. Besides, there might be some one interesting at the treasure-dowered farm ; and indeed there was, a delightful, if unwashen, girl of fourteen. But Casanova could see to her cleanliness, and promptly declaring that the help of a

virgin to cut out his magician's clothes was essential to his success, lodged her with him. To an accompaniment of comic ceremonies which he invented as he went, he got himself made a cloak, a tall hat covered with alarming symbols, a wand, a magic circle and in the meantime he carefully prepared the girl for the double part she was to play, which she soon came to understand, and to agree to without reluctance. The night of the full moon was chosen for both the conjuration and the consummation of love, and the necromancer descended majestically into the courtyard, laid his circle, gyrated round it three times, and pronouncing fearsome, meaningless words, jumped into it. But then a terrific thunderstorm swept over the country, lightning flared all around the courtyard, seeming to fly over Casanova, and to strike into the ground about him. Fear began to seize upon him, he grew terrified, and wanted to bolt back into his room, but the idea came overwhelmingly over him that the reason why the lightning could not touch him was because he was in his circle. 'Thus,' he was to say, 'I adored my own handiwork!' Funk kept him in the storm, in the torrential downpour, his rational system of philosophy crumbled away, and he cowered before an avenging God about to blast him for his wickedness. He repented, but find

ing himself paralysed by fear, judged his repentance useless. However, the storm passed, but Casanova's state of mind was not so fleeting. The sight of the expectant virgin filled him with terror, even the next morning a curious state of inhibition persuaded him that the girl's innocence was protected by God, and giving plausible reasons for his failure to extract the buried treasure, he rode away sadly to Cesena, hastened by a wisp of fear that the Inquisition might be after him.

But his depression did not last long. For, by blustering, he almost immediately saved from trouble a Hungarian captain, who, though he could speak only Latin, German, and Czech, was travelling with a young officer who could speak nothing but French. Suspicion, immediately confirmed by a charming head peeping out from the bedclothes, told Casanova that the French officer must be a young woman. Her cavalier was elderly, they spoke no language in common, and she was adorable; there was only one thing for a man of honour to do, and Casanova did it. There was no difficulty. The Hungarian was a man of sense, and moreover had not the means to entertain the lady properly, and the latter was agreeable to the exchange. Casanova carried her off to Parma in a sumptuous coach he bought for the occasion.

Followed three whole months of unalloyed bliss, for Henriette, sublimely beautiful, added the keen edge of a fine education to the charm of perfect manners. Her story was a little vague. Somehow she had embroiled herself with her Provençal family, and was being conducted to a convent in Rome by her father in law (though why in male costume is not explained) when she escaped. She dreaded lest the festivities then agitating Parma owing to the arrival of its new lord (thanks to the War of Austrian Succession), the Infant Philip, should bring to the Court some visitor who would recognise her. She preferred seclusion, Casanova's company was enough for her, and they never went out except in a carriage. Once indeed they did risk discovery by going to an entertainment given by a medallist whom Casanova patronised, an evening during which Casanova was melted to tears by discovering in Henriette a skill in 'cello-playing that amounted to genius, but no harm came of it. But at last, fatefully, Henriette's dolorous prognostication came true. she was recognised, negotiations were entered into with her family, and she was forced to agree to go back to it. Why, oh why, had he not taken her to England? Casanova mourned. They would have been safe there. Yet after all, perhaps it was just as well. he was at the end of his financial



tether, and made no scruple of accepting the rolls of gold coins she pressed into his hand when they parted at Geneva. It was a terrible parting, all the more so as she had, unbeknown to him, scratched on the window of their room in the Hôtel des Balances with a diamond he had given her, 'Henriette also you will forget' Ah ! never ! never ! And indeed till the end of his days the thought of their love brought balm to his spirit

He returned to Parma, ill from grief, and took to his bed, refusing food. But for the urgings of a certain De la Haye, whom he had employed to teach Henriette Italian, he would have died of starvation ; however, in a few days he was so far recovered as to have a quarrel, and to seek relief in the arms of a casual lady. And then sickness of the soul was replaced by sickness of the body, with curious results. For the mercury which he took as part of his cure made cavities in his brain (the analysis is Casanova's), into which entered vigorous seeds of religious bigotry, blown there by De la Haye. The ribald blasphemer became pious, prudish, a puritan abhorring the flesh. He wrote to Bragadin, telling him about De la Haye, and a young protégé of his who had given up his worldly prospects to become a Catholic and then Bragadin, who had smoothed out Casanova's difficulties with the

Inquisition, told him it was safe for him to return to Venice.

The Senator and his cronies were delighted with the change that had come over the young man—mass every day, sermons often, evil company never—No gambling, paying his debts, studying when he was not engaged in edifying conversation with them, why, it was miraculous! De la Haye, and his young convert of twenty five, Baron Brvois, were invited to live with Bragadin. They came, and Casanova was to find once more that good actions lead to repentance as often as bad ones. For De la Haye turned out to be quite different from the honest fellow he had seemed, he was a 'Jesuit'—the most opprobrious term in Casanova's vocabulary—for he wormed himself into Bragadin's confidence, so that Parahs and the whole authority of the cabbala had to be invoked to check his influence. Brvois was different, and by leading the gay life proper to his years, soon helped Casanova to fill those lamentable cavities in his brain, till before very long he was leading as wild a life as ever. Once more it was too wild, and after a short period, owing to an eager interest taken by the magistrates (enlightened perhaps by De la Haye) in an abduction which made some noise, Casanova found it wise to have an irresistible desire to see Paris. Luckily he had

plenty of money ; he had saved Bragadin's allowance, won a State lottery, and been lucky at the tables. So on the first of June 1750 he set off for France, arranging to meet on the way his actor friend Balletti, who was going to Paris to join his mother, the famous Silvia, for long the darling of the Parisian populace on the boards of the Italian theatre.

To Paris, then, the seat of a baroque royalty, with its vain but delightful pomp, its mistresses, its music, and its theatre. He hardly paused on the way, except to enjoy a gala at Turin, and to enter into the mysteries of freemasonry at Lyons—not completely however, for it was not till later that he lit upon the inmost mystery, which is secret because it is incommunicable ; and the moment he got to Paris he was plunged into its social joys. For Silvia was charming to him, and since she was petted by the best society (for to her art she added a virtue unique in her profession), she was able to introduce Casanova to the cream of the capital. By great good luck, one of the first whom he met was old (to distinguish him from young) Crébillon, the tragic dramatist, and Censor-Royal. The moment they met, Casanova cried rapturously that he had wanted to know him for eight years, and followed up the compliment by declaiming to

him his translation into Italian blank verse of a tirade from one of the Censor's tragedies Crébillon, irresistibly charmed, recited his own version of the passage, and pointed out the places where the translation bettered the original. The old man paid great attention to Casanova's talk during dinner, and then told him that he had all the conversational talents except that of being able to speak French correctly—he was too inclined to dress Italian idiom in French words. Casanova agreed, he said that one of his objects in coming to Paris had been to learn French well, but even if he could find a master equal to the strain of so 'unbearable, questioning, curious, importunate, insatiable a pupil,' he would never be able to pay him. 'I have been looking for such a pupil for fifty years,' Crébillon assured him, and offered to be his teacher. So for months Casanova went to learn French at Crébillon's lodgings, where the colossal old man—he was much taller even than his pupil—would sit with his leonine face blurred by the fumes of his incessant smoking, and surrounded by a menagerie of animals, which included more than twenty cats. Casanova even took him his verses. 'These, Crébillon would say, 'are good, they are correct, the idea is beautiful and highly poetic, the language is

perfect ; but all the same the poem is bad.' 'But how ?' Casanova would ask 'I can't say. It lacks the *je ne sais quoi*' And to make his criticism plain, he told Casanova to imagine a man who seems to have every charm, but of whom a woman will yet say, 'I can find no fault in him, but somehow I do not like him.' Thus Casanova soon came to speak well, for he knew that society will pass over a man's vices, but will be merciless if he is ridiculous ; and although this prevented him from making those amusing errors which by their happy indecency brought him a certain notoriety, he was very grateful. But Crébillon did more, and it was through him that Casanova came to know the famous literary figures of his time (for it was as a man of letters that he took his place), such as d'Alembert, with whom he felt much sympathy, the Marquise de Tencin, his reputed mother, whose works are now forgotten, the Abbé Guasco, the historian and friend of Montesquieu, and, after some months, the great Fontenelle, then over ninety years old. How raw Casanova still was may be judged from his telling Fontenelle that he had come from Italy solely to see him. 'Admit, sir, that you have taken your time about it,' Fontenelle answered amiably, pricking the empty compliment and at the same time administering

a reproof in a way which could not but please his visitor

The Casanova of these years at Paris departs, in his outward life, far less from the average young man eager to enjoy himself than the Casanova of any other period—there are no extravagant pranks. He did not, certainly, omit to pay tributes to Venus, and once he was haled before the police on a charge of seduction, from which he emerged scatheless since he was able to turn the charge back upon his accusers, mother and daughter. There is the odd episode of the young Murphy, whose bared beauty he admired so greatly that he had her painted by no less a person, it would seem, than Boucher, but whom he spared, thinking indeed that she set too high a value upon a bauble. The picture was seen by the King, who, anxious to decide whether the portrait flattered the original, had her brought to Versailles—where she stayed. The Casanova that emerges, however, is the eager student of literature, of life, and of manners. He was fascinated by all that he saw and heard, yet all the while his mind was critically alert. He was astonished at the trick the French had of putting their writings into blank verse of twelve syllables before turning them into prose, he argued decisively as to whether in songs the words or the music

should be written first ; he was a judicious haunter of the stage, an enthusiastic critic of dancing. He never lost an opportunity of meeting the distinguished and recording their conversation. Thus when the Abbé Voisenon told him that the King was coming to attend a Parlement to hold a bed of justice, he asked, ' Why bed ? ' ' I really don't know—unless it is that justice sleeps there ' He was extremely curious about the French character, and though he admired it wholeheartedly was alive to its ridiculous side, as, for instance, their excessive following of fashion, or their complacency in believing that the sundial at the Palais Royal cast the sun's shadow more correctly than any other. He was full of political observations, and his acumen told him that should royalty ever summon an Assembly, its days were numbered. In sentiment he was reactionary, yet at times he was oddly democratic, an attitude which peeps out in his description of the Queen's luncheon, where she sat alone at table surrounded by exalted courtiers.

' Liking a dish she had been given, she had some more of it, and then ran her eyes around the circle in front of her, no doubt to see if among her observers there was not one to whom she should acknowledge her pleasure in food.

She found him, and said, " Monsieur de Lowendal "

At that name I saw a superb man come forward bowing, who said

"Madame."

"I think that ragout must be a chicken fricassée."

'I think so too, Madame.'

After this answer, given in the most serious tone, the Queen went on eating, and the Marshal returned backwards to his place. I was charmed to have seen the famous warrior before whom Berg-op-Zoom had been unable to stand, but it pained me to see so great a man have to answer a question about a chicken fricassée in the same tone of voice that a man pronounces a sentence of death.

How active his mind was, however, is to be judged from the long midnight conversation that he had with La Vésian, a lovely young Italian who, with her brother, had come to establish herself in France. Casanova, touched by her beauty, did everything in his power to set her in the right way to become the mistress of some rich seigneur. The talk ran upon the nature of happiness, upon what real pleasure consists in, upon the foundations of moral prejudice, upon the success of philosophers in attaining the happiness they preach, and if Casanova's philosophy was based upon Gassendi (as Molière's was) rather than upon austerer philosophers, it was none the less reasoned for that. Nor, during his stay, did he let his magic rust for want of practice,



and if his greatest feat was to cure the Duchess of Chartres of acne (Paralis knew something about unguents and diet), he gained a vast reputation, and a tangible reward, by revealing that a certain unknown lady's illness was feigned from a desire to deceive her husband. The Duchess, who had asked the question with a very definite lady in mind, to Casanova's alarm betted heavily that she had not got the cancer she advertised, and found herself triumphantly right.

But though Casanova was enjoying himself hugely, he could not stay in Paris for ever ; funds are not inexhaustible ; and in August 1752<sup>1</sup> he decided to accompany to Dresden his eldest brother, whom he had brought to Paris to study painting, but whose efforts had been greeted as schoolboy daubs. He must study more elsewhere before assaulting the Academy. So they went off together to join their mother at Dresden, where Casanova wrote a skit, which was acted, on a play of Racine's, and received a present from the King of Saxony. From Dresden he went on to Prague, and from Prague to Vienna, the beauty of which was ruined by the activities of the 'Commissioners of Chastity,' horrid

<sup>1</sup> So he says, but there is reason to believe that he stayed a good deal longer, and also a strong suspicion that he paid a visit to London, about which he is silent

kill joys established by Maria Theresa, whom, however, he managed to cheat. He met many old friends, including De la Haye, whom he happened upon in the public library, and made new ones, most important of all the great poet librettist Metastasio, with whom he made a lasting friendship, infinitely admiring not only the quality of his inexhaustible works, but also the vast labour expended on them. Then he went home to Venice, where one of the first people he met was Thérèse Imer, now Pompeati, on whose account he had been flung out of Malipiero's house many years before. She received him in bed, according to the innocent custom of the day, her son who was with her had the tact to leave the room, and Casanova spent four hours with her, the last of which, he declared, was delicious.

## IV

### CONVENT AND PRISON

(1753-1756)

CASANOVA's discreet self-exile had not altered his character a jot. He was essentially the same man as before, only more assured, more experienced, and so more boldly determined to squeeze the utmost out of life's pleasures. His was not the type that gets satisfaction out of responsibility, from constructive work, from developing itself in any particular direction. He was learned, yet did nothing with his learning except shine in conversation; he had limitless energy, but could only dissipate, not direct it; he was blessed with more than common intelligence, but did not care to concentrate it—enough for him that it should prick the fat complacent bubbles of current religion and morality. All these are traits born of his genius for living in the present.

The police soon became interested in this tall figure, with the flashing, almost mad eyes set in the olive countenance, and had little good to say of him for the next two years. They were aghast at his having imposed

himself upon, and half ruined, the excellent Senator Bragadin, whom he had made believe in the imminent appearance of an 'Angel of Light', he lived, they noted, at other people's expense, chiefly by clever imposture, he misled patrician youths by making them gamble, blaspheme, and lead riotous lives, he had a footing in every kind of society, from Venetian grandees and foreign ambassadors to the spume of the stews, he professed, they said, to live according to Epicurus, and was with it all a furious libertine, he wrote satires and the usual poems, he was a magician and a free mason. In short, 'You can tell by talking to the said Casanova that he carries unbelief, shamelessness, and debauchery to such a point as to arouse horror'—and the Venetian spies were not squeamish. The only thing in his favour was that he seemed incapable of cheating at cards, though, had they known, it was at this period that he consented to pool resources with a certain Croce to run a faro table, at which, it is true, Casanova acted merely as croupier, but was aware that Croce 'corrected' the luck. It was highly successful, but then, as the police said, all his strokes were on the large scale. He was himself on the large scale, meanness and pettiness are the last things one associates with him, his generosity, indeed, was fabulous.

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It seems a grimy world, harsh, hurtling, indifferent to the values by which society exists ; but Casanova lived in it sustained by a kind of lyricism which picked the flower and ignored the midden from which it sprang, a lyricism which became vocal as he described his love-affairs, with a wealth of detail, a caressing touch, which might be offensive were he not so uniquely free from a sense of guilt . there is no trace of a leer in his writing. An affair to him was like living an amorous passage in Ariosto . it was a poem—of the fleshly school, no doubt, but the flesh seems to have no taint of corruption in it. Thus it is that C C , in spite of the favours she granted him, shines from his pages with all the fresh brightness, the gay laughter, the graceful gambolling beauty of the fifteen summers that were hers

C C , whom history has decided to be Catherine Campana, came into Casanova's life through her brother, as obvious a scoundrel as ever flaunted, and who, hoping to profit by Casanova, to all intents thrust his young sister into his arms . For a time, checked by admiration and respect, Casanova was all honour, objecting angrily to the brother's indelicate goadings . But she was irresistible, he loved her, she returned his passion, and would hear nothing of his being too old for her. Still

Casanova hesitated, but the memory of Lucie of Paseano came to his mind — if not he, then another ! Besides, this time he meant marriage, and if in their ardour, in the springtime of their lives and of the year, at Carnival time, which with the brother's connivance offered so many gracious opportunities in island gardens, they forestalled the ceremony, still Casanova was set upon marriage. At least, he persuaded Bragadin to promise to settle him in life, and to make a formal offer for the girl's hand. But her father was obdurate, Catherine was to go to a convent until she was eighteen — then they would see. Is it possible that Casanova gambled on this refusal ? ' I have often loved women to madness,' he remarked in another place, ' but I have always preferred my liberty '

So C. C. departed to a convent at Murano, but she found means to correspond with her ' husband,' while he took to going to mass at the church where the nuns went, where, though he could not see her, she could look at him. But if she could see him, so could the nuns, and he attracted the attention of a certain M. M. (most probably Marie Madeline Pasini, afterwards Abbess of the convent), who skilfully arranged for him to meet her at the convent grating. He was exalted with amazement at her beauty, she was the most lovely person he had ever seen, and cultured, and witty.

He found also that she was rich, so could bribe, she had a lover who too was rich, and therefore also able to bribe, and as a result the peccant nun had the servants and the gardener in her confidence, and possession of the key of a small door that gave on to the water. The lover, moreover, had a *casino* not far away, *casino* being the name given to the little arbours of love or private gambling paradises, rented by seekers of pleasure. The lover also had perfectly safe gondoliers, discreet servants and cooks, besides an admirable collection of aphrodisiac engravings; all of which, not being jealous, he allowed M M to use as she wished. Thus Casanova and M M had no difficulty in meeting. But had Casanova no *casino*? she asked. He had; at least he obtained one with all speed, in Venice, and the Turk was not more sensual in his pleasures than the man who had designed it, the bedroom being completely lined with mirrors, floor and ceiling as well as walls. Sometimes M M. would come to Venice disguised as a man, and then Casanova would take her to the opera, or to noble gambling establishments. And soon he met M M's other lover, who turned out to be M de Bernis, French ambassador, a man of a most amiable disposition with a knack at verse-making, who whenever he went away left Casanova the key of his

*casino* and the ordering of his servants. Then one day that Casanova went to a rendezvous with M. M. at their bower, the person who greeted him as he came in was not M. M., but C. C. ! She was, it appeared, intimate, very intimate, with M. M., and knew all about her latest intrigue. In a few days he was meeting both the ladies together, but then M. de Bernis stepped in, and declared himself in love with C. C. Casanova could not object, and rendered up the girl whom he still looked upon as his 'wife.'

At last, however, Bernis went away on a diplomatic mission. He gave Casanova the use of his *casino*, but his boatmen were no longer available. So Casanova used himself to fetch M. M., but this gave rise to some terrible alarms. Once a storm broke out, and he was only just able to make headway against it, and with help, itself dangerous, reach the door of the convent in time, once some one stole their boat, and rushing about in agony, he was only by the greatest luck able to get another so as to make his mistress safe. And then Bernis left finally for Paris, giving up his *casino*, so that intercourse became impossible. Casanova, however, took rooms near by, provided by the sympathetic convent laundress, and since the laundress had a daughter who looked after him, he consoled himself, merely



seeing M M at the grating. Gradually, however, Casanova went to Murano less and less ; and when C C. told him that her father had found a husband for her, but that she would run away with him if he wished, he answered that he had no position, and advised her to marry the stranger. There were tears ; both M. M and C C felt that life was over for them ; but Casanova's heart soon healed, and he was away on another intrigue.

Not that his life was all love His boundless vitality carried him into every society, and he was a well-known figure, too well-known Leader of a clique of young men who respected nothing, saying whatever came into his head, full of himself, giddy, pleasure-loving, hating prudence, jeering at everything that seemed to him stupid, whether sacred or profane, calling all which raised civilised man above the savages by the damning name of 'prejudice,' having the word 'honour' ever on his lips through pride rather than through respect of principles, he was ready to break all laws which interfered with his pleasure or his spite He never failed any one, he said , he did not disturb the peace of social circles, he had nothing to do with politics or the quarrels of others Thus judging himself he could find nothing amiss , if he was a libertine, that was his own affair , and he lived by the curious theory that nothing was

wrong so long as one did not deceive one's self as to one's motives. Certainly a hypocrite was the last thing that he was.

But unfortunately he took sides in literary factions. There was a certain Abbé Chiari (a rival of Goldoni) who wrote plays which Casanova ridiculed in a number of satires, to such effect that the theatre began to empty, to the indignation of Signor Condulmer, who was financially interested, and who, having just entered upon a period of office as Inquisitor, was an ill man to offend. The Inquisition had long had its eye upon Casanova, the difficulty had been to catch him on any indictable charge. but now, egged on by Condulmer, one of the spies, Manucci, lighted upon the magic books in Casanova's possession—books which he is quick to say he did not believe in, but which it amused him to turn over. The matter was made easier for them since at that time Casanova was living in a suburb, the heat of a Venetian summer being too much for him, he explained to Bragadin, though his concern really was to cure a beautiful girl of the virginal anæmia which made her as pale as a statue, a good deed in which he was eminently successful. Returning to his lodging on the morning of July 25th, 1755, he found that his quarters had been raided by *Messer Grande*, the chief of the

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archers, on the pretext of finding contraband salt. Casanova, who dined with Bragadin every evening, told his protector, and the old Senator, who doted upon Casanova like a son, was dreadfully alarmed 'Make no mistake,' he begged; 'they don't break into houses to find salt: it is you they're after. I have been an Inquisitor, and I know.' But Casanova pooh-poohed the matter; he refused to fly, as Bragadin earnestly implored him to do; he would not even shelter in his palace for a few days. He was conscious of no guilt; what was worrying him much more was his debts. So he went home, and the next morning was awakened by *Messer Grande*, who, with an escort of forty archers, dragged him off to the prison known as 'the Leads'.

Casanova declared he never knew what he was charged with, he was never tried, though the records show that evidence was taken against him. It was stated that he had bewitched Bragadin, that he had in his possession a curious article which resembled the aprons worn by the so-called freemasons in their so-called lodges, that he was a corrupter of youth, and that seeing he consorted with both patricians and foreign ministers, he probably gave away State secrets. Then, on the ground that he was a notorious enemy to religion, he was condemned to five years' imprisonment.

He was not informed of the sentence, and for some time daily expected to be released from the noisome hole under the leads in which he lay in half darkness, roasted by the heat, excoriated by the fleas. He was a man of action, and he had nothing to do. He was a man of intellect, and there was nothing to read, there was no one to talk to. The authorities sent him books, not at all to his taste, but even so, though there was hardly light enough, he waded through them, even through *The Mystic City* of the ecstatic theolept, Sister Agreda, but her outpourings seemed to him such monstrously silly lucubrations, that far from making him more religious, they turned him still further from the faith, though not before he had himself been infected for a while by visionary exaltation, an experience which taught him that strength of mind was only relative, and that the judgment is affected by what it has to feed on. Mental and bodily fever produced by such reading, by a natural despair, and bad food, laid him low. Life hardly seemed worth living. But a doctor cured him, as much by substituting Boetius for Sister Agreda as by physical remedies, and gradually as he recovered his health he regained his spirits, and, like the man of mettle that he was, began to think of escape.

Luck helped him. Being after a while

allowed to take limited exercise in the attic next his cell, he found, among a pile of rubbish, not only a bolt about eighteen inches long, but also a small slab of marble which he found would serve as a grindstone. Working desperately for a fortnight, he succeeded in making a small octagonal pike of the bolt, and having achieved this, he decided to cut a hole in the planks under his bed. But then, they swept under the bed. He therefore told the guards that the dust affected his lungs, and when they persisted in sweeping, he cut his finger, and producing a blood-stained handkerchief, swore that the blood had come from his lungs, a diagnosis confirmed by the doctor, who forbade the sweeping to continue. So far good. But it grew very cold, in spite of the warm things Bragadin sent him, the light, even with the lamp he managed to make, was very inadequate, he was continually delayed by other prisoners being put in his cell, and it was not till May that he got to work. When would he finish? A priest who came to confess him told him that he would be freed on his saint's day, but which was his saint's day? He tried St John of Compostella; but the day passed: he then pinned his faith upon St Mark, patron of all Venetians, but his day also passed. Other saints were fixed upon, but all with the same negative result.

Clearly he had not hit upon the right saint, it would be better to trust to his own ingenuity

With infinite patience he gouged out a circular hole in the planks, getting rid of the chips in the street, but then he found himself faced by slabs of marble concrete. Thinking of Hannibal crossing the Alps, he proceeded to soften this with vinegar, and succeeded in making a large enough aperture both through the concrete and another layer of planks working furiously, in a constant state of semi-conscious prayer, swelling to fervent thanks to God as he saw the end of his labours approach. Then, most inopportunistly, another companion was introduced, to whom pride forced him to reveal his plan, for how else could he explain his not minding the filth and the stinks under his bed? In due course the newcomer went away, keeping the secret, and Casanova decided to make a bolt for it on the night of August 27th. But on the 25th his gaoler appeared bursting with good news. Casanova was to be transferred to a better cell, in which he could walk about, and which had two windows with views over Venice to the Lido! The blow was terrific, and there was no protesting. He staggered sadly to his new abode—keeping his eyes open all the while—the only thought buoying him up being that

his chair was transferred with him, and hidden in the chair was the ever-blessed pike

Casanova did not admit defeat for a moment, and at once regained confidence when he found that he had silenced the gaoler, who came in raving when he discovered the hole in the floor 'Where did you get the hatchet? Where is the hatchet? I shall report this, and you will be terribly punished.' 'If you report me,' Casanova answered, 'I shall swear that every implement I had came through you' Thus effectively blackmailed, the gaoler soon softened, and, rather than buy books with the surplus of Casanova's food allowance, which he regarded as his perquisite, he put him in touch with the prisoners next door, who had a good library, not of novels, Casanova was relieved to find, but of scientific and philosophic works In exchanging books the neighbours soon got into correspondence, and Casanova, transferring his pike by a sublime trick to the monk Balbi who languished next door, arranged the preliminaries of escape Balbi was to cut through his ceiling, covering the hole with pious pictures, pierce through the party wall, and descend through Casanova's ceiling on the night decided on for escape The scheme progressed smoothly; but what night was Casanova to choose? He decided to interrogate Fate through the medium of Ariosto. Erecting

cabbalistic pyramids upside down, he was directed to the first line of the seventh stanza of the ninth canto of *Orlando Furioso*. There he read

Tra il fin d' Ottobre e il capo di Novembre

'Between the end of October and the beginning of November!' Nothing could be clearer. Besides, November 1st was All Saints', and if Casanova had a patron saint, he was bound to be commemorated on that day. Affairs were complicated by Casanova once more being given a companion, a rascally, treacherous spy, whom, however, he terrified by superstitious fears into joining in the venture, and all was ready by October 31st.

At the concerted moment Balbi appeared through the ceiling, and Casanova, with a pack of clothes and a bundle of ropes made from his sheets, clambered into the next cell. There, however, his companion said he would go no further, as did Balbi's co-prisoner, so Casanova investigated the roof alone, and found he could make a hole in it. Unluckily there was a young moon, which made enough shadow to attract the attention of the crowd in the square of St. Mark's below, and they had to wait till it set. At last, at midnight, precisely at the only moment between the two months, while the clock was still striking,



Casanova hoisted himself on to the roof beside his fellow fugitive. The latter at this stage did nothing but upbraid him for not having a cut-and-dried plan, as he had said he had, but Casanova took no notice, and using the pike managed to turn the edges of the lead slats on the roof enough for them to cling to with their fingers, and draw themselves up on the ridge. Then what? Crawling along, Casanova investigated the gable windows, which were above the chancellery. They would have to climb through them. He let Balbi down inside by the ropes, but found the drop was too great for himself. He explored again, and with great good luck found a ladder, which, by herculean efforts, he got to the window; but in trying to force it in he slipped, slid to the edge of the roof, and only prevented himself from plunging fatally over the cornice by clinging with his elbows. He levered himself up, and then for a few moments was paralysed by cramp. At last he got the ladder in, and rejoining Balbi, collapsed into coma for two hours. Then Balbi, dithering with funk, awakened him. They investigated the loft, found an open door and a staircase, then another staircase, which took them into the chancellery, where they were held up by a locked door. The pike again came in useful, and they managed to bash in an upper panel,

through which Casanova thrust Balbi, and then himself wriggled through, tearing his flesh mercilessly on the jagged edges. They found themselves in another room, where Casanova changed his clothes and bandaged his knees. It was now light, and, looking out of the window, he was seen by some people, who, astonished at any one being there, told the doorkeeper, who proceeded to come up to them. 'Don't utter a word,' Casanova told Balbi, 'when the door is opened, just walk out quietly with me.' The doorkeeper was so dumbfounded at seeing two men come calmly out, that he neither said nor did anything. The fugitives strolled to the canal bank, where Casanova, talking loud to attract attention, engaged two gondoliers to row them to Fusina. Where the canal divides he asked, 'How quickly can you get us to Mestre?' To 'Mestre?' the gondoliers exclaimed, 'you said Fusina.' 'No, no! Mestre!' But the stupid Balbi supported the gondoliers, and Casanova, forcing a laugh, said he must have made a silly mistake, he meant Mestre. He was almost free, and burst into tears, to the amazement of the insensitive monk. They landed, and got clear of the immediate neighbourhood, but not before Balbi's idiotcy had provided some moments too thrilling to be pleasant. Casanova saw he must part from

Balbi, which he did only by dire threats, and began to make his way on foot to the frontier. But he was exhausted; his wounds were troubling him; he must rest. Asking a peasant whose were the houses he saw round about, he was told that one of them was the home of the chief of the archers, the very man whom Casanova must most diligently avoid. But something impelled him to that house, a fascination he could not resist, he walked towards it in a daze. There, inventing some cock-and-bull story, he was taken in, tended, fed, cured of his wounds by a country balm. When in after years he was accused of inventing the tale, he said, 'Why, the archer's house was the safest place. It was the last spot he would think of looking for me in. He was twenty miles away chasing me.' Whatever had caused Casanova to go there, the move was triumphantly successful. Nourished and recovered, he slipped out of the house the next morning, and after travelling another two and a half days, with sundry adventures, he crossed the frontier, and was safe<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There are some Casanovist scholars who deny the truth of all this story. They say Casanova escaped by means of Bragadin's bribery.<sup>1</sup> I cannot stay to bandy words with infidels. The existence of the bills for repairing the holes Casanova had made should convince them.

# V

## THE GREAT ODYSSEY BEGINS

(1756-1760)

WHEN the Ballettis received him in Paris with open arms, they told him they had expected him ever since they had heard of his escape. Where else should one come to make one's way in the world? For if the whole of eighteenth century Europe was individualistic enough, no town, as Casanova realised, offered such opportunities for advancement 'if you took it in the right way.' Therefore not now for him the undirected life, or rather the life directed wholly towards pleasure he had led on his last visit. This time he would settle in respectable rooms of his own, select his acquaintance with an eye to business, and become—well, Fate would show. He called immediately upon M. de Bernis, who, a favourite of Madame de Pompadour, was secretary to the ministry of foreign affairs, and was soon himself to become minister. Bernis received him generously (with a roll of gold), carried him to the Pompadour, sent him to the great Choiseul, introduced him to the subtle diplomat the Abbé de la Ville,

and most important of all, recommended him to one of the chief treasury officials, M Duverney, as a brilliant financier

A financier? Casanova had never thought of himself as such, but after all, why not? If Bernis said that Casanova had a scheme for increasing the revenue, well, then, he had one Duverney invited him to dinner to meet the most exalted economists, for Casanova had told him he had a project 'I know what it is,' Duverney said 'I am sure you do not,' Casanova answered, 'for I haven't breathed a word about it to any one' Indeed he had not, even to himself The dinner was extremely boring, for Casanova could not understand the technical jargon talked; he hoped that his silence would give an impression of sapience But after the meal Duverney took him aside, and showing him some papers said, 'There's your project!' Casanova saw at a glance that it was some form of lottery, and replied, 'Well, yes, but not altogether'

Soon, then, Casanova was associated with the brothers Calsabigi, who, though international financiers, were not always in the most honourable repute One of them never appeared in public, for he was afflicted with a kind of 'leprosy' which insistently demanded unmannerly scratching He believed in God and His works, he said, and being convinced

that God had given him nails as his only relief, he would use them. 'I see you believe in final causes,' Casanova told him, 'and I congratulate you, but I think you would all the same scratch even if God had forgotten to give you nails.' The silly put Calsabigi in a good humour, Casanova's boldness, his financial daring, and an unexpected knowledge of the mathematical laws of probability, did the rest. The scheme, with his modifications, was passed by experts, including d'Alembert, Casanova was granted a valuable concession which gave him more than an honourable income, and being the only one of many owners of ticket-offices to have the entrée into society, and having the wit to promise payment the day after the draw instead of a week later he scored heavily over his colleagues.

Here, then, was a new career opening up before him, one which would lead to wealth and honour. But alas, he noted regretfully, one essential was lacking—constancy of purpose. For the moment, however, he was fitfully employed, first as a government spy on some French men of war, in which he dined, and observing shrewdly, drawing out his hosts, and writing an admirable report, was well paid. A farcical business, he thought, any one of the junior officers would have written the report for nothing, but ministers

have a mania for spending other people's money. Then he was sent to Holland, to discount, it seems, large amounts of French *actions*, success depending upon whether foreign capitalists could be induced to believe that the war would soon be over. (It is only by such indirect references that we are reminded that we are now in the period of the Seven Years' War.) He seems to have been successful, and when he came back to Paris was congratulated by Choiseul, petted by the Pompadour, and erected into the lion of the hour.

And yet, was it really so? for Casanova's account of his life at this time is so skilfully confused that it is impossible to unravel fact from brilliant fiction. Either his memory was conveniently at fault, or he deliberately falsified dates, persons, and events: the narrative is a masterly and baffling mixture of truth, lies, and a clever raising of the probable to the rank of fact. Unless he could be in two places at once, a feat of which even a fairy is incapable, some of his stories burst at the prick of historical criticism. This is as true of his social life as of his political escapades. Certain realities, however, emerge. Socially he lived as a rich man, with a town lodging and a country house, two coaches, plenty of horses, and a retinue of servants to tally with his being always overdressed. Apart from

ministers such as Bernis, at whose levees he was assiduous, he frequented chiefly such great ladies as were interested in sorcery, such as the Comtesse du Romain and the unbelievable old Marquise d'Urfé. At the latter's house he met the self-styled Comte de Saint Germain, the most notorious necromancer of his age, patronised even by Louis XV, a more sinister because a more consistent charlatan than Casanova, whose butt and rival he was. He went to such lengths as never to eat in public, because, he said, the food provided was unsuitable to his age, and this, since he credited himself with three centuries, was not unlikely, and it was with Madame d'Urfé that Casanova visited Rousseau, they took him some music to copy. But the main prop of his social life was the Balletti household, where he fell violently in love with the daughter Manon, whose accepted fiancé he was. Less permanent erotic adventures were not lacking, especially the astonishing one with X. C. V. (actually Justiniana Wynne, daughter of an English baronet), whom, after the application of a magic abortive known as 'aroph' (to apply which should have been the privilege of a husband), he spirited away to a nunnery for her lying-in. The affair brought Casanova into conflict with the police, from whose



clutches, however, he was saved by Madame du Ruman, who was party to the secret

His life in Holland was less glorious, but, though steadied by high masonic ceremonies, none the less exciting. He says he was sent there officially, under the ægis of the great Choiseul, and worked hand and glove with M d'Affry, the French ambassador. The official correspondence, however, indicates that though Casanova called on Affry, Choiseul warned the ambassador against the adventurer; and it seems that Casanova's protector was not the Duc, but the Vicomte de Choiseul, an insignificant person. The affair is a mystery, which time has not yet cleared up.

It is certain, however, that his friendships among Jews and bankers were facilitated by Madame d'Urfé, who almost worshipped him as half-supernatural; and her giving him a large sum of money to negotiate from one currency into another led him to the home of a merchant of the well-known family of Hope or Hop. M d'O, as Casanova calls him, was a good business man, but his daughter Esther was a miracle, and thus Casanova, while yet remaining constant to Manon, was inevitably enraptured. He taught her cabbalism, which so fascinated her that she insisted upon her father being instructed, only, of course, up to the point that Casanova thought discreet.

He convinced them by finding a lost note book containing several thousand pounds sterling, but since Casanova had himself accidentally caused the package to slip between the stairs, Parlis was favourably placed for discovering where it lay. Casanova refused the two thousand pounds he was immediately offered, but he was made free of the house, and given every commercial opportunity.

Ghosts of the past met him in Holland, such as Lucie of Pascano in the form of a loathsome decayed bawd, into whose hand he thrust some gold and hurried away. Less ghostly was Thérèse Imer who, now a widow (her husband Pompeati had committed harakiri in a fit of madness), was eking out a living by singing at concerts. With her was her son, a handsome youth, but a dreadful little beast, brought up to horrid dissimulation, and a little daughter, who, it was obvious to every one, was the image of Casanova. When was she born? Casanova calculated hurriedly. Why, of course, she was his daughter! He offered to adopt her, but Thérèse would not part with her, though she gave him the chance of educating her son, which he accepted. The meeting between the old lovers was affectionate, but Casanova was not to be entangled. Instead he gave Thérèse some money to finance her projected descent upon England.

He might have stayed in Holland M. d'O offered to take him into a partnership of magic-directed business Esther would become his wife—she professed herself more than willing, and Casanova certainly desired her possession—but it would have meant settling down at Amsterdam, or at the Hague, and Casanova could not bear so static a prospect Also, he confessed, he was idiot enough to want to cut a dash in Paris ; besides, was he not engaged to Manon Balletti ? So he went back to Paris, taking with him the young Pompeati, who was for a short time stolen from him by the Marquise d'Urfé, who was convinced that this was the virgin youth, born of the union of a transcendental with a mortal, through whom she would be regenerated Then, however, he was sent to school, where he managed to pass himself off as the Comte d'Aranda He was a promising youth.

Paris, however, was changing for Casanova. Silvia Balletti died ; Bernis, after becoming the Cardinal de Bernis, was dismissed the ministry, and left Paris, treasury officials who knew not Casanova came into power. He must try his hand at something new. Thus, since there was at that time much talk of being able to print silks (then an unknown art), Casanova started a factory, to the lasting amusement of Madame d'Urfé, who thought

this was only a blind to cover necromantic proceedings. The factory, however, did not go well. For one thing, Casanova was always making presents of dress lengths to charming ladies, moreover, there were twenty girl hands in the factory, all young, all lovely, they were books of which the title pages were so inviting that he had to read every one of them, to Manon Balletti's not unnatural fury, and this proved expensive. Besides, the dyes printed on the silks simply would not stick, they ran at the first washing. Difficulties accumulated, and Casanova, who had already sold his lottery office, parted with some of his interest in the business to the factory doctor, immediately after which there was a robbery, followed by a lawsuit, and, swiftly, an arrest for debt. Casanova was flung into prison, from which he circularised all his friends. Some sent money, Manon brought the valuable diamond earrings her lover had given her, Madame d'Urfé laughed, and invited him to dinner that very day. She was convinced that this incarceration was only an original kind of advertisement. But soon she brought the necessary money, and in four hours Casanova was free, shortly afterwards showing himself in the theatre. And then, since M. d'O would not lend him money to pursue the silk-printing business, but repeated his offer of a partner

ship, the adaptable Venetian thought he had better go back to Holland. He was not making his way in Paris.

Thus Casanova's memory told him ; but he forgot a little matter of an action over a letter of exchange which he had backed and could not pay ; he forgot that he had spent, not four hours, but two days in prison ; he forgot, especially, some fraudulent letters of exchange he and his brother François (now becoming a famous painter of battle-pictures) had palmed off, concerning which legal action was imminent, making hasty flight imperative. History, backed by police records, has not been so kind as Casanova's autobiographical muse, and has remembered these things, besides pointing out that Casanova did not stay in Paris until December 1st, 1759, but disappeared from it in September.

However, whenever it was, he set off gaily enough in a chaise, preceded by his valet on horseback ; and as he went he read Helvétius's great book *De L'esprit*, wondering as he read why it had been censored, seeing that after all there was nothing in it that had not been said before, notably by Pascal, who had handled the subject much better. The book refreshed him however, and it was no abashed or daunted adventurer who returned to Holland to bask in the smiles of Esther d'O, and to

call brazenly on the French ambassador, who, he says, received him most amiably. This time Saint Germain was also there, selling, he hinted, the French crown jewels, but Casanova, who found that this was a rival far too near the throne, routed him by means of Paralis. He spent most of his time, however, with Esther d'O, now madly cabbalistic, and nearly succumbed to her chains. For just then Manon Balletti wrote to tell him that all was over between them, she was going to marry some one else, and this news, whether it was a shock to his vanity or to his heart, shattered the rejected lover so completely, that for three feverish days he refused food, whereupon Esther supervening as a ministering angel, he gave her all Manon's touching love letters, many of which still exist. Esther made sure of capturing this almost superhuman figure, and indeed Casanova was so seriously in love with her that he did his best to disillusion her as to his magic powers, but still she thought him the most marvellous man in the world. But no, the mercuric Casanova would not bind himself, it would be better to travel a little in Germany.

It is impossible to follow Casanova's now dizzy peregrinations through Europe, to note, even, the adventures of heart and body in which he dared Fate, or his wildly novelistic

love-affairs, or his princely entertainments contrasting with the moments of penury when he had to pawn his clothes. We must pass by the occasion when, intrepid as ever, he escaped over the walls of Stuttgart, as we must the period of ten days when he dallied, seriously, with the idea of becoming a monk. This was in Switzerland, where, taking eight unappropriated letters of the alphabet, he made himself known as the Chevalier de Seingalt. Where was the harm? Plenty of other people took names they preferred to their own, Metastasio or Voltaire to begin with: and the name Casanova—well, there was an actress so called, and a painter; besides, there were certain unlucky papers signed with it, it was better not to draw attention to that name. So it was the Chevalier de Seingalt, who, armed with letters from Madame d'Urfé and the Duc de Choiseul (which put him in the good graces of M. de Chavigny, the French ambassador), gave the impression to the learned of a remarkably speculative man, interested chiefly in natural history and medicine—they wondered even if he were not the Comte de Saint-Germain—a haunter of libraries, deeply interested in politics, the army, and social customs, and anxious to meet the world-famous scientist Haller, whom he charmed. Others, especially

a certain syndic in Geneva, saw a less intellectual side of the Chevalier but then there were always these two Casanovas, the one ruled by his frantic body, the other governed by his enquiring mind, on the one hand the eroto-maniac, on the other the curious and accurate observer, the sage commentator, the wit and poet. Nor were the two in conflict with each other, so that it is not at all incongruous in reading the memoirs to break off a love affair in the middle to follow a philosophic dissertation on 'form,' and the impossibility of defining 'beauty.' One Casanova was necessary to the other if full development of either was to be attained, for himself at least, he seems to have solved the problem of harmony. Or was it merely a division into separate emotional compartments?

His heart was still aching from the conclusion of a stirring Swiss love affair (he had relinquished the lady, according to his honourable wont, to some one better able than himself to look after her) when, going to Geneva to see Voltaire, in the room he was given at the hotel he saw scrawled on the window 'Henriette also you will forget. His hair bristled with his emotion, and he flung himself down on a sofa. Noble and tender Henriette! Where was she now? The memory roused a train of self-examination



Ah ! he had not the delicacy, nor the probity, of those happy days ; nor, most horrible notion of all, the vigour. Yet the idea of Henriette fanned his waning flame into a blaze , his heart being free, he was sure that if he knew where she was he would dash off to find her. Instead, within two days, he interlarded his Voltairean conversations with a debauchery so gross that even he did not dare describe it fully

Voltaire had been expecting him, and received him with ceremony at his court of Les Délices. But the opening did not augur well between the wizened gimlet-like intellectual, and the gigantic, flaunting, overwhelmingly physical Chevalier de Seingalt. ‘ This, M de Voltaire, is the great moment of my life. I have been your pupil for twenty years, and my heart is full of joy at seeing my master.’ ‘ Sir, do me the same honour for another twenty years, and promise me to bring me my fees at the end of the time.’ Everybody burst out laughing, and hardly heard Casanova’s retort, ‘ Willingly, if you will promise to wait for me.’ Barbed conversation ensued, on Algarotti, on the sonnet, and then on Ariosto, where Voltaire saved all by reciting, without a hitch, several stanzas of *Orlando Furioso*, and then retracted all he had ever said against Casanova’s poetic divinity. Yet Casanova was

not won over, more sharp words passed between them, till M de Seingalt was persuaded to recite his favourite passage. He did it with so much feeling, he put so much emotion into his rendering, that the tears gushed from his eyes, his auditors sobbed, Madame Denis, Voltaire's niece, fell on his neck, and Voltaire himself embraced him. Sublime moment ! After which the scene concluded so well, that on Casanova's saying that he was going away on the morrow, he was implored to stay in Geneva at least three nights more, and dine at Les Délices every day.

But when Casanova went to Les Délices the next morning, the major honours were for the Duc de Villars, an effeminately decayed old debauchee of whom Casanova has left a well-bitten etching, the Chevalier de Seingalt held his tongue during dinner. His egotism was jarred, and when Voltaire spoke to him, he was contradicted. 'The Venetian government tyrannic ? Far from it, one could live more freely there than anywhere else, such was the type of interchange. After the meal Voltaire took Casanova by the arm and did the honours of his garden, of the beauties of the mountains, and showed him 'the Rhone, which I send off from here to France.' 'A transaction which does not cost you much,' was the acid answer. Voltaire imperturbably did all he could to

soothe his ruffled guest, held forth at length on Italian literature, with great wit and erudition, Casanova admits, 'but he always drew a wrong conclusion. I let him chatter his nonsense' Still Voltaire behaved charmingly, took him to his room, informally changed his wig for a cap, talked while Casanova behaved like a petulantly fractious schoolboy, and even showed him his vast repository of correspondence. And somehow, in the end, Casanova was tamed. The next morning he sent his host a book of macaronic poems, accompanied by some blank-verse of his own. But when ('after a delicious night, feeling as fit as a fiddle') he went at midday to Les Délices, Voltaire was not visible. Madame Denis entertained him, but not sufficiently well to conquer his huff, and he refused to tell her the story of his escape from the Leads, which at other places he was only too willing to embark upon. When the great man appeared at five o'clock there was a prettily acerb talk on Italian literature, only saved from ruin because they agreed in praising Goldoni. Finally, at the last visit, Voltaire was in a thoroughly bad temper. He and his guest bickered ceaselessly; first about the macaronic verses, which led to poisoned shafts about Voltaire's then unowned *Pucelle*, about whether Casanova or Martelli had been the first to write Alexandrines in Italian, in which

## THE GREAT ODYSSEY BEGINS

Casanova proved to Voltaire's discomfiture that Martelli's verses were not Alexandrines at all. Voltaire grew warm, Casanova warmer, as the latter argued that it would be folly to abolish superstition since it was necessary to the existence of humanity, a standpoint which naturally infuriated Voltaire, whose dream it was to do so, though it is not certain that he got the better of the argument, which led to another about government, in particular the government of Venice, about which Casanova was always loyally sensitive. The Chevalier seems then to have lost his manners, for when Voltaire expressed great admiration for Haller, his guest regretted that Haller had not the same high opinion of Voltaire. 'Ah, ah! It is possible that we may both be mistaken,' Voltaire retorted and soon after, without saying another word except the formal ones of departure, Casanova withdrew, to spend the night and most of the next day in writing down these conversations, of which the record in his memoirs are but 'a feeble extract.'

The curious thing about these conversations is that in them it was Voltaire, not Casanova, who asked the questions. Self-centred, Narcissistic even, Casanova had gone, overdressed as it were in mind as well as in body, 'to point out some of his errors to Voltaire,' especially his great error of being too idealistic in his

view of mankind : and he had done so. He had tackled the great mind of his age on his own ground, and Voltaire had not seemed to appreciate it ! A little later Casanova sent the sage a translation of *Les Écossaises* into Italian verse, and Voltaire said the translation was bad. Thus for ten years Casanova inveighed against Voltaire, wrote a book to cut up the *Éloges* published in his praise, did all he possibly could to injure his reputation. But in after years he admitted he was wrong—he had that sense and that degree of greatness—and made such ‘humble reparation’ as he could. ‘If we meet again in the Shades, freed perhaps from the acidity of our mortal natures, we will come together agreeably : he will receive my sincere apologies, and we shall be, he my friend, I his sincere admirer.’

## VI

### THE INVENTIVE MAGICIAN

(1760-1763)

THEN at once off again, accompanied by a gay, impudent young Spanish valet taken bodily out of an eighteenth-century French comedy. But why, it has been asked again and again, this ceaseless movement? so much of it without any evident motives. Was he a spy? Was he a secret emissary of the Grand Orient, the subversive masonic society of Europe? The question has never been answered, and to the outward eye the film unrolls itself as a constant succession of amorous intrigues, of gambling exploits, cast against an immutable background of eighteenth-century friezes. Amorous intrigues! we are apt to get tired of them, and feel inclined to say with Lorenzo da Ponte, Mozart's librettist, that we listen eagerly to Casanova's conversation for the many interesting, witty, and even sage things that he says, and for their sake put up with what is disagreeable. Yet on second reading we find that each affair has its own special flavour, its sidelight on psychology, its revelation of

manners and customs Unlike Casanova, we begin to forget Casanova, and think instead of the multitude of people mixed up in his firework existence.

And after all, some of his most interesting loves are those where he was unsuccessful, as that of the Mademoiselle Romans whom he met at Grenoble. She was a perfectly dazzling creature, but her unconscionable price was marriage, do what Casanova might to break her resolution. Casting her horoscope, Casanova found that it was her destiny, if she went to Paris before she was eighteen (she was already twenty-three, but he had a mania for reducing the ages of his heroines), to become the King's mistress, and bear him a son who would be the hope of France, so he abandoned his pretensions, and strongly urged her to go. She went, and did become the King's mistress, giving Madame de Pompadour many qualms, and bore a son which the King so far acknowledged as to call him Louis-Aimé de Bourbon Casanova consoled himself with others at Grenoble, and then went on to Avignon, where, amid scabrous joys, he gave a day to sensibility, and went to Vaucluse to weep over the relics of Petrarch and Laura Then Marseilles, then Genoa, where he translated *Les Écossaises*, and sent Haller the news that he had had him elected to the

Arcadians, a literary society in Rome, then Florence

There he met his early preceptor, the Abbé Gama, who asked him to represent Portugal at the forthcoming Congress of Augsburg, for no clear reason except that this is a fairy story, and he also ran into the arms (literally) of one of his very earliest loves, the Thérèse who had passed as the *castrato* Bellino. With her was a young man of seventeen, whom she presented to the world as her brother Césarino, and as she looked only twenty four, nobody suspected that he was her son—and Casanova's. The likeness to the father was striking, but the two kept the secret, Casanova giving his fatherly feelings outlet in private. The youth filled him with delight, but he spoilt conversation when supping with Thérèse, for 'the presence of Césarino gave the meal a serious, if agreeable tone. Youth, pure and lovely, diffuses an inexpressible charm into life, and its innocence imposes respect and restraint' Only, one would gather, however, when youth is male. He enjoyed Florence, was made much of by the famous Marquis Botta Adorna, twice visited the virtuoso collection of Walpole's Sir Horace Mann, but was, unfortunately, ordered to leave Tuscany at short notice on account of a *spurious* letter of credit, even though he had been quite innocently drawn



into the business. So to Rome, where he stayed with his brother Jean, then working under the famous painter Raphael Mengs, engaged chiefly in making drawings for Winckelmann, with whom Giacomo had many scholarly conversations.

In Rome Casanova moved in the best society, as became a man with a coach and four, a valet and a secretary, and who made magnificent presents of rare books to cardinals. He visited Pope Clement XIII to beg his help in obtaining forgiveness from Venice, but the Pope, choosing an easier part, fobbed him off with the Order of the Golden Spur and appointed him apostolic protonotary *extra urbem*. Why? Well, that is another Casanovian mystery, giving weight to the suspicion that he was a Jesuit. Whence the decoration, whence Augsburg, and the frequent call he felt, but never obeyed, to go to Portugal. And had he not been educated by the Jesuits? The idle-minded may linger over the unlikely supposition, before wondering why Casanova should suddenly have dashed off to Naples.

Whatever the reason, Naples procured him a very curious adventure. The girl who there captured his heart and his senses was the mistress (though only formally, since her lover was impotent) of the Duc de Mantalone. Leonilda was indeed so ravishing and so well

dowered that Casanova at last determined to marry and settle down to which end the girl's mother was sent for. To Casanova's delighted surprise she turned out to be the Lucrezia who had been his first passionate love but, oh horror! she declared that Leonilda was his daughter! It was too much even for Casanova. Though he saw nothing contrary to nature in incest, yet a loathing of it was a human prejudice he could not help sharing. There was, of course, no evil in it if parent and child were not aware of the relationship, so 'incests, eternal subjects of Greek tragedies, instead of making me weep, make me laugh, Phèdre, indeed, makes me shed tears, but then that is Racine's doing' So back to Rome, safely bachelor, having resisted the offer Lucrezia had made him of joining her life to his on a Neapolitan estate.

Rome, in spite of varied pleasures, did not hold him long. He sped back to Florence, but not being allowed to stay there, he left immediately with a young dancer, La Corticelli, who kept him company amid the gaieties of Bologna till she went to a theatre at Prague, leaving him free to investigate Modena. Turned out, without explanation, after two days, he went to Turin, where, advised by the Abbé Gama, he awaited the Congress of Augsburg, there again to be warned to leave, an admoni-

tion he successfully resisted with the aid of the foreign minister, the Chevalier d'Osorio. Then to Chambéry for a short stay marked by erotic adventures more amusing but no more edifying than those which had occupied him in Turin, and thence to Paris, where he at once reported his presence to the Marquise d'Urfé—for had he not come to Paris solely to engineer her avatar as a man ?

‘ We spent the next three weeks in making the preparations necessary to this divine operation, and these consisted in worshipping in a special way each of the geni of the seven planets on the days consecrated to them. After these preparations I was to go to a place revealed to me by these geni to find a virgin, daughter of an adept, whom I was to fertilise of a boy by means known only to the Rosicrucian brethren. This son was to be born alive, but only with a sensational soul. Madame d'Urfé was to receive him in her arms at the moment of his birth, and to keep him next her in her own bed for seven days. At the end of this time she was to die with her mouth glued to that of the child, who, by this means, would receive her rational soul. After this permutation it would be for me to look after the child by the magic means known to me ; and as soon as the child should be three years old, Madame d'Urfé would regain consciousness of herself, and I would begin to initiate her in the perfect knowledge of the Great Science ’

Well, if the credulous old woman asked for

this outrageous nonsense (and she was very rich), why not give it her? Would scruples on Casanova's part save her? Not even the threat of death, which he had hopefully advanced, would deter her. If not he, then another, say Saint Germain, would reap the benefit of her lunacy. 'Fraud is a vice, but honest guile can be regarded as the husbandry of wit. To be sure, this virtue looks like roguery, but one has to accept that and the man who, at need, cannot practise it nobly, is a fool.' That would seem to settle the point of conscience, but it does not dispose of the question of veracity. The whole thing even so far, seems incredible, what is to follow, a magnificently inventive phantasmagoria, tries faith still further. But then, if Casanova embarked on this business for gain, he did it also for the immense amusement to be got out of it. If his fertile mind projected a fantasy, there was nothing in the world to prevent his carrying it out. He was an artist, in the burlesque if you like, but an artist none the less.

His stay in Paris was, however, cut short by his running through the body a rascal of his acquaintance whom he thought would die. He made for Augsburg, where, he told Madame d'Urfé, he would meet the Portuguese minister who would be able to release from the dungeons

of Lisbon the Rosicrucian adept Quérilinte, who was essential to final enlightenment. Augsburg and the neighbouring Munich were fatal, for there, through a failure of will, Casanova allowed himself to be robbed of both money and health by a woman too clever for him. Worse, since he had left Paris in a hurry, Madame d'Urfé had not been able to supply him with the quantity of clothes, jewels, and money necessary to his enterprise. She had sent them after him by his valet-secretary Costa, and Costa had decamped with the treasure. Luckily a letter of credit was sent by other means, and this enabled Casanova to cut his usual figure in society, and, after his recovery, to amuse himself in his usual way. Yet amid these crude enjoyments, Casanova the thinker snatched the friendship of the admirable Count Lamberg, philosopher and man of letters, with whom he corresponded for the rest of his life. The Congress was cancelled.

For the half-immortal immaculate virgin to be the instrument of Madame d'Urfé's transformation, Casanova pitched upon his Florentine drab, La Corticelli, who was always up to any mischief. She was to impersonate 'Mademoiselle Lascaris,' derived from the last of the Roman emperors, a name hit upon by chance. Madame d'Urfé was delighted, for the d'Urfés claimed to have Lascaris blood ;

she called the dancer niece and Princess, and treated her as such. The awful impregnation took place at the hour of the May moon, but Casanova declared it unsuccessful because, he said, young d'Arinda, Thérèse Imer's son, whom he wanted to get rid of (he was making eyes at the Corticelli), had peeped through a curtain and seen it all. However, the next moon would do, so long as the act did not take place in France. So the party went to Aix-la-Chapelle, Madame d'Urfé presenting the Princess Lascaris with a box of jewels, which, however, Casanova impounded in case the Corticelli should want to bolt. But at the June moon, just as the crucial instant of three minutes past four was approaching, the divine instrument fell into convulsions, and informed Casanova that she would go on having convulsions at crucial instants until she got back the jewels.

Casanova was in some difficulty. He could not leave Aix, for he had spent or lost all his money, had pawned his valuables, including the jewels, and was awaiting a remittance from Monsieur d'O. On his making a pyramid of numbers with Madame d'Urfé, the oracle revealed that La Lascaris was possessed by an anti Rosicrucian demon, and would no doubt shortly give birth to a gnome, that she was mad, and not to be believed (a wise precaution this, as she soon carried out her threat of telling

the marquise the whole story) ; that a new vessel of election would easily be found ; and that in the mean time Madame d'Urfé should write to the spirit of the moon

Thus on the day appointed by the phases of that powerful orb, Casanova and the old marquise enacted portentous rites in a consecrated room, next to which there was a bath, filled with warm water perfumed with various essences pleasing to Selenis. After appropriate ceremonies, the adepts stripped completely and advanced to the bath, on the edge of which was an alabaster bowl containing gin, and irradiated by the moon. Casanova, uttering mock cabbalistic words which the marquise repeated after him, set the spirit alight and burned the letter to be wafted to Selenis, Madame d'Urfé declaring that she saw her very words slithering up the moonbeams. They then entered the bath, and a few moments later the answer from Selenis, written circularly in silver letters upon green transparent waterproof paper, appeared floating on the surface ! The precious missive was taken out, placed on a scented cushion of white satin, and piously read. It announced that the old woman's hypostasis into a youth could only take place next spring, at Marseilles, in the presence of the great Quérilinte ; that the Lascaris must be got rid of, and that Casanova was to take under his wing a

widow and her daughter, and conduct them to Alcece. Thus Casanova disposed of La Corticelli, sobbed off the marquise, and was able to continue an intrigue which he had begun with the widow's daughter. All was well—he had in the mean time won vast sums in gambling and was well equipped for further calls. Indeed it was high time to go, for the Princess Lascaris was whirling in public like the ballet-dancer she was, and rumour was becoming ominous.

Until the spring of 1763, then, the Chevalier de Seingalt was free to live his life of ordered disorder, which he did to the full, gadding from Switzerland to Lyons, from there to Turin and Milan, happy in love, happy in gambling, winning enormous fortunes and spending them lavishly, everywhere in high settle, superbly dressed, wearing wherever he went the cross of the Order of the Golden Spur which he had had set in diamonds. Not that he set any store by the decoration, except literally as decoration, yet because of it, fools, who did not know how little it was worth, gave him the greater honour. At Geneva (this time he did not visit Voltaire) he fell in love with a girl on account of her brilliance in theological discussion, a blue stocking who carried learning so far that when divesting herself of her last garment she quoted St. Clement of Alexandria on the relation



between clothing and shame. It was in connection with that affair that he warned parents that it was far easier to seduce a girl if she was accompanied by another than if she was alone, in the latter case the fierce barriers of virgin modesty would give ample protection, in the former, one would egg the other on. It was, however, in Milan and its neighbourhood that he had his most glorious adventures, and there his chief triumph was over a girl to whom he introduced the best literature, and this forms the centre point of a maze of scintillating intrigues, among which stands out the glorious fancy-dress ball to which he took two ladies as 'beggars,' dressed in the most sumptuous clothes torn to tatters patched with the most expensive brocades. Otherwise amusing is the occasion when, having displeased a countess, he found in the back room of a shop an indecorous image of himself about to be pierced with pins to his eternal undoing, which, to be quite safe, he destroyed.

Then for the great operation to be performed upon the Marquise d'Urfé, who waited for him at Marseilles at the heaven-appointed time. The fun for Casanova was to cap her extravagances with better ones of his own. Might he not have spared her out of pity? Well, she would never be cured of her folly until she was ruined, so what was the good of having

scruples? 'Had I worked merely to enrich myself at her expense, I would have been a scoundrel, and would have despised myself. But my intention was only to indulge my fancy, and I considered that I was justified in using a madwoman's money to carry out my pranks. To impersonate Querilinte, Casanova employed a third rate rascal called Passano, who, blacking his eyebrows, freely rouging his cheeks, and putting on a white wig, at first considerably impressed the marquise, who greeted him in a ludicrous costume weighed down with jewels. Unluckily she informed the pseudo-Querilinte that she destined him a valuable casket of jewelry, a fact which Casanova had, for obvious reasons, wished to keep secret. Indeed, as a result, when the next day Passano fell ill, he threatened to write to Madame d'Urfé giving away the whole plot, and did so. Thereupon Casanova hastily told the marquise that the so-called Querilinte was an impostor, to be answered calmly, 'Why, of course, didn't you know? My genius revealed to me during the night that it was Saint Germain.' So making a swift journey to Aix, she interviewed the Duc de Villars, governor of the province, who had been in love with her fifty years before, and had Passano expelled.

What happened next is doubtful, for though

Casanova gave his fancy full rein at Marseilles, he did so again when he wrote his memoirs, so that two distinct versions exist. In both, however, the scheme now was that Madame d'Urfé should herself be impregnated with the youth through whom she was to be regenerated ; and, Quérilinte being out of the question, the task would fall to Casanova. A part of the operations, however, and a very important part, was to get possession of the extremely valuable casket of gold and jewels, which, originally prepared for Quérilinte, was now to be offered as a gift to the Immortals. To this end Casanova fabricated a copy in painted wood which he easily substituted for the real casket , but then, how to convey away the replica so as to make the old lady believe that the Immortals had received it ? However, a small point like that did not baffle Casanova's inventiveness. Madame d'Urfé having told him that she had once had the water-sprite of the Seine for a lover, he decided that a female water-sprite should be the pivot of this piece of magic , and instructing his then mistress Marcoline, a frolicsome Venetian, as to what she was to do, he staged an ingenious scene. At the hour indicated by the motions of the celestial orbs, Casanova would, though in all decency, share the marquise's bed, after putting the sham casket on a pile of wood in

the fireplace. Then the water sprite (who was dumb) would enter, suitably clothed, or unclothed, offer the marquise some tinder soaked in spirit which the old lady would light, carry it to the fireplace and set the wood ablaze. All went according to plan. Marcoline appeared, in due course lighted the fire, and the casket with its contents were rapt by the flames to the destined recipients in ethereal spheres. Then a certain operation took place, and the sprite transferred 'the verb' to the old lady, who was thus impregnated to her entire satisfaction. Marcoline vanished, Casanova joined her, and the real casket was triumphantly filched away.

The greatest of all magic operations being thus happily inaugurated, Casanova decided to go to England to take the 'Comte d'Aranda' back to his mother, and, if possible, to retrieve his own daughter. Travelling to Lyons with Marcoline, his carriage broke down near Aix-en-Provence. The inhabitants of the neighbouring château came to the rescue, and invited them to spend the night. The châtelaine was a woman whom the rest addressed as Countess, and she appeared to be charming though she zealously kept her face hidden by a hood. Owing to a trifling accident she twisted her ankle, and retired to her bedroom, where, it was announced, they would all sup. Surely

now Casanova would be able to see her face. But no ; she sat up in bed with the curtains so arranged that her features could not be distinguished in the gloom. She was gay, witty, and spoke Italian, and, what was more, Venetian Italian. It was disappointing not to see her, especially as she did not appear the next day. When the travellers got to Lyons, Marcoline drew from her pocket a letter the Countess had told her not to give the Chevalier till they had arrived. Casanova tore open the blank cover, and found beneath, as the only address, 'To the best gentleman I have ever known.' Opening the letter he saw that that also was blank, except for the name—'Henriette.' Casanova went white as a sheet. Henriette ! He would go back. Alas ! it was clearly her wish that he should not. He would respect that wish. Was he not the best gentleman she had ever known ? So on to Paris with Marcoline.

## VII

### DOWNFALL IN ENGLAND

(1763-1764)

THE moment the Chevalier de Seingalt reached London in the summer of 1763, he drove to Carlisle House, Soho Square, to deliver the 'Comte d'Aranda' to his mother, Thérèse Imer. She, now known as Madam Cornelis, would no doubt greet him with that warmth which he himself always maintained for his old, but never discarded loves. He was full of pleasant anticipation, she would fly to meet him, as she had in Holland. But no, after announcing himself he was given a note by a flunkey, and read that he was to take d'Aranda to a house not far off. There he was met by a stout housekeeper, who was full of delicate attentions for the youth, but completely ignored the Chevalier. D'Aranda was given a suite of rooms, and provided with servants, while Casanova was relegated to a side room, and his valet stuffed into an attic. It appeared that Madam Cornelis was a great figure, with a sumptuous town mansion, thirty-three servants, a coach and six, and a country house, and thus

'Mr. Cornelis' would also be a person of great account. Casanova was apparently looked upon as the boy's tutor, a paid pedant, a nobody! So telling his valet to carry in his boxes but not to unpack, he took himself off, fuming with rage, to explore London.

Striding along to appease his dudgeon, he soon found himself in a coffee-house at the bottom of the Haymarket, all unaware that it was the very one, the Orange, which he had been warned to avoid as the meeting-place of all rascalion foreigners. Calling for lemonade, he picked up an Italian newspaper, but his eye straying, he found the man next him carefully correcting Italian imprint, changing the modern forms of words into obsolete ones. Irritated at this 'barbarism,' he forthwith told his neighbour that it was centuries since *ancora* had been written *anchora*. 'I know,' he was answered, 'but I am quoting Boccaccio, and quotations should be accurate.' A scholar! Casanova was enchanted, especially since it turned out that this was Martinelli, whom Casanova knew by repute. He at once introduced himself, subscribed for four copies at a guinea each of Martinelli's edition of the *Decameron*, and made firm friends. He was regaining his temper. They sallied out together to find Casanova a house, and in a short time he had rented a superb furnished mansion in Pall

Mall at twenty guineas a week, a price agreed to without bargaining, for no good came of haggling in London

Comforted in his esteem, he faced the future hopefully, but not in playing the part Madam Cornelia had suggested, nor even in the better place she later proposed him of being steward at her vast public entertainments, which at first scandalised but soon drew in both righteously and ungodly, 'Horace Walpole declared, himself not much bewitched by her palace of splendour. No, his was a different rôle. The Chevalier de Seingalt, wearing the cross of his Order, was at the moment possessed of a dazzling wardrobe, with lace every woman envied, a good substantial sum in cash and notes, and a sound reserve in jewelry, not to mention such appurtenances as a French valet and a negro footman. His letters to several bankers would, with the introduction he had to Lord Egremont, Secretary of State, enable an intelligent man to float a lottery scheme. There would certainly be something maleficent in the air if he could not cut a dash, certainly all would not be right with the tender sex if great happiness should not result. A steward! the idea was laughable. Seingalt, at the prime of life, would take London by storm, as he had taken Paris, Milan, Geneva, and other towns where he was already a legend



And besides, London was interesting, the English very odd, unlike anybody he had ever met, in manners, tastes, even in build. Not only the men and women, but even the animals and fish grew differently in this strange place ; the very earth was peculiar, and Thames water was water unknown elsewhere. Martinelli took him about, showed him the City, introduced him to Lord Chesterfield's friend, Dr. Maty of the British Museum ; so Casanova was able to make many curious observations about the English, and about their country, where everything except unadulterated wine tasted of salt, so aquatic was the land, so maritime the people. They were prodigious meat-eaters, but soup, which luckily Casanova's valet could make, was not to be had, for it was looked upon as pap for invalids. Stout, however, was a great invention. Moreover, the English lived differently from any people he had ever met, and their pride was terrific. Every people, of course, thought themselves superior to all others—so that the difficulty was only to find which held second place—but the English outdid every one else in this. Still, if they were disgustingly democratic, if a gentleman could not wear his best clothes in the street for fear of being dirtied by the mob, they were in many ways admirable. Their towns were marvellously clean, their roads and their

posting service superb, while their faith in their paper money attested the solidity of their credit. Of course, if anything went wrong, the result would be bankruptcy—and Casanova the financier envisaged dark possibilities. Most admirable of all, perhaps, were their night watchmen, who very quietly did the job it took a posse of archers to do anywhere else.

But somehow Casanova did not make the way he deserved, Madam Cornelis's greeting seemed symbolic in its coldness. Lord Egremont died soon after the Chevalier had presented his letter, the bankers did not jump at Casanova's lottery, and, indeed, that field was at the moment held by Lord Bute. Gambling, except for mere drawing room stakes, was not to be had, for Casanova seems to have been warned off putting up for White's. Nor did he flourish in society. The acquaintance he had made on the way over with the Duke of Bedford by surrendering half his boat did not ripen, Lady Northumberland, though friendly enough, thanks to an introduction in the form of a portrait from her son Lord Warkworth, to whom Casanova had surrendered a mistress in Genoa, soon went to Ireland. Lady Harrington—did Casanova know that she was nicknamed 'the Stable Yard Messalina'?—seemed to take him nowhere but to Madam Cornelis's aristocratic Assemblies,

and if he knew the Hon Augustus Hervey and Lord Pembroke, they seemed to regard him merely as a vivacious companion in a debauch. Was it possible that there was something hostile in this insular atmosphere ?

Certainly Venus did not seem to favour the island , even venal love, which might serve between whiles, proved unsatisfactory, though well organised Perhaps it was too well organised, with its lists of promiscuous ladies One adventure, indeed, Casanova did have His carriage not meeting him at Ranelagh one evening, a charming woman offered him a lift. He got into the coach, he pressed her hand, to have the pressure returned ; he kissed her cheek, and was not repulsed ; when he placed his mouth on hers, those gracious lips responded At last, circumstances being propitious, he was able to give his fair companion indubitable proofs of the feeling she aroused in him He introduced himself ‘ Don’t ask my name,’ he was answered , ‘ we shall meet again,’ and was thereupon unceremoniously dropped at his house Still, it was promising Not long after he went to call upon Lady Betty Germaine, a woman of distinguished fashion : she was not at home ; would he wait ? He was ushered into the drawing-room, and there he saw his Ranelagh charmer reading the *Gazette*. ‘ Ah ! ’ he exclaimed, ‘ perhaps you

will present me to Lady Betty' 'But I don't know you, sir!' 'But I told you who I was! Surely you haven't forgotten me?' 'No, I haven't forgotten you, but a frolic does not constitute an introduction' And she went on reading the *Gazette* This was more than Casanova could understand it put him completely out of action

But he could not live alone, for he was not, as he said, cast in the hermitic mould The simplest solution would be to put up a notice in his window

Second or third floor to let cheap, furnished, to a single and unattached young lady who can speak English and French, and is at home to nobody either by day or by night

His old housekeeper roared with laughing, spiced comments appeared in the papers,<sup>1</sup> to Casanova's delighted admiration at the freedom of the English press A hundred or so young women of doubtful reputation appeared, but none of them really pleased the lonely hero of romance At last there applied a most ravishing creature, in all ways beautiful with her pallor and her black hair, and nobility patent in every gesture She got her board and lodging for next to nothing Casanova promptly fell in love with her, really in love, she stirred

<sup>1</sup> Mr Bleackley has been unable to find them.

## CASANOVA

ation as well as his senses ; and what line, as she was called, even more were her wise and witty conversation, of poetry, her skill at chess, and her of languages. This paragon had disguised as a man from her native with her husband disguised as a but the latter had been captured as riding in England, and, the marriage summated, had been dragged back al. The affair was in the hands of minister Pombal, and Pauline, eking rable residue of money, was waiting irable decision. In the mean time, nova was still irresistible, the con- not take long, and he added Pauline to the list of women he had really of women who had loved him, in o much that she almost regretted her

It was a dream of paradise while most aptly commented by passages sto , but then the long-expected to Portugal came, with a vast supply nd Pauline, as she went weeping to ress, begged Casanova never to come ess she sent for him. For weeks he the influence of a ' Platonic ' love he could not, nor did he wish to, ad of her graces, of those perfections hich equalled, even surpassed, her

physical beauty. Perhaps he remembered her with peculiar vividness in his later years, for she was his last complete love.

When she had gone he passed his time as best he could, visited Lord Pembroke, and was astonished at his fighting-cocks, gave Dr Maty a cameo, observed the Stock Exchange, where men knew each other's incomes but not each other's names, was presented at Court by the French ambassador, and got his own brick on La Cornelis, not only by becoming one of her high guests, but by sending their daughter to a very expensive and aristocratic school, where he would go to visit her, and, with the juvenile inmates, stalk like a vulture among the doves. But meanwhile his funds were dwindling, there seemed no way of making them up, and worst of all, he heard that Madame d'Urfe was dead. That bountiful source was dried up.<sup>1</sup>

No doubt Fate would provide in due course, for the moment there appeared a strange and attractive creature to occupy his thoughts, La Charpillon. It was not in any way an affair of the heart, it was rather as a priest of Venus that he approached her, some time in September. Fatal day, that he was to look back upon as marking the deflexion of his life, day

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact she did not die until 1775 but Casanova believed the report. At all events, she had died to him.

his imagination as well as his senses ; and what made Pauline, as she was called, even more desirable, were her wise and witty conversation, her love of poetry, her skill at chess, and her knowledge of languages. This paragon had eloped disguised as a man from her native Lisbon, with her husband disguised as a woman ; but the latter had been captured as he was landing in England, and, the marriage still unconsummated, had been dragged back to Portugal. The affair was in the hands of the great minister Pombal, and Pauline, eking out a miserable residue of money, was waiting for a favourable decision. In the mean time, well, Casanova was still irresistible, the conquest did not take long, and he added Pauline not only to the list of women he had really loved, but of women who had loved him, in this case so much that she almost regretted her marriage. It was a dream of paradise while it lasted, most aptly commented by passages from Ariosto ; but then the long-expected summons to Portugal came, with a vast supply of *reis*. And Pauline, as she went weeping to her happiness, begged Casanova never to come to her unless she sent for him. For weeks he was under the influence of a ' Platonic ' love for her ; he could not, nor did he wish to, rid his mind of her graces, of those perfections of soul which equalled, even surpassed, her

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that the curve of his existence stopped rising, and began to decline. For La Charpillon was determined to defeat, not merely to reject him. He should have had forebodings, for the very first time she met him she confessed that had her mother allowed it, she would have answered his notorious advertisement, 'to punish the impudent author.' 'How would you have punished me?' 'By making you fall in love with me, and then making you suffer abominably. How I would have laughed!' Casanova accepted this as a challenge, thanking her incredulously for the warning. How could this exquisite girl, with her chestnut hair, her blue eyes, her delicately dazzling skin, and above all her candid expression of benevolence, be such a monster? He was already half-enthralled.

La Charpillon being well advanced in the trade of courtesan, there should be no difficulty, and although Lord Pembroke warned Casanova that she was a trickster, on the day appointed he went to tackle her mother, her two aunts, and her grandmother. There was a surprising mutual recognition between Casanova and the horribly decayed mother, for some years earlier she had planted him with two bills that were dishonoured, and which he still held. She had not realised that in M<sup>de</sup> Scingalt she would meet a creditor! He found himself

in a nauseating nest of witches living chiefly on the immoral earnings of the girl, and collaborating with various insufferable rogues Casanova was not long in coming to the point, and gave the mother a hundred guineas to embark on the manufacture of an 'elixir of life.' Perhaps it was this blatant purchase that exasperated La Charpillon, at all events, instead of entering into possession of this Circe, as he called her, he was led the most extraordinary dance which lasted for weeks. At first she seemed all willingness, but refused the final favours. He turned over to her the spurious bills, besides vast sums of money, but still she did not yield. 'You have been too brutal,' she said. 'Woo me handsomely for a fortnight, make me in love with you, and I will be yours.' For a fortnight, then, the wooing went on, with theatres, supper parties, expeditions, and expensive presents of china. On the appointed night they shared a room, but she swaddled herself in a long gown, and hunching up her body, resisted strenuously. Softness, anger, pleading, cursing, were all ineffectual, and even rough handling which covered her with scratches and bruises. He retired baffled, swearing he would have no more to do with her. But when she approached him again he was weak, he relented. Why had he been such a fool? he asked himself in

his old age 'Ah, reader!' he apostrophises us, 'were you never in love?' Love? we ask in our turn, deciding that his was a far more complex emotion. There was Casanova's usual lust, but also there was aroused in him a combative spirit, a deep male brutality, which stirred up a desire for possession quite apart from enjoyment, to which was added a determination not to be made a fool of. More money flowed, and he took a coy villa at Chelsea where she promised to live with him. But the first night there was the same obduracy; nothing would make her submit; and once during the struggle when he felt his hands about her throat, he was deeply tempted to strangle her. There was nothing to do but send her away the next morning.

Still he went on, still calling himself fool, still fatefully lured, till one day he went to the sinister house in Denmark Street to see her, and found her in the embraces of a barber! He stormed and belaboured the young man; La Charpillon screamed, the old harridans crept in, he smashed the furniture, the valuable china he had given, everything he could see, creating a pandemonium which attracted the night-watchman. Suddenly it was found that La Charpillon had vanished. The servants were sent out, but could not find her. What might happen next? What

might not happen? Casanova, his feathers drooping, staggered back to his house.

The next day he was told that she had come home, but was dangerously ill. He called, was not allowed to see her, was told she was delirious and raving against him. Casanova's nerves were completely shattered. He could not sleep. He could not eat. Each day the bulletins grew more alarming, there was small hope for her life. He haunted the door, and seeing a man come out asked, 'Is that the doctor?' 'The doctor! She's past doctors now. That was a priest.' At the end of three days he was informed that she had only a few hours to live. He went home, and then the animal in him took its revenge, for he suffered a wholly animal collapse, against which the will and the reason were powerless. He would go mad—and on such occasions the only remedy is suicide. He made his will, leaving everything to Bragadin, shut up his jewels and money in a case, put his pistols in his pocket, and buying as much lead as his pockets would hold, headed for the Thames.

But just as he neared Westminster Bridge he was accosted by an acquaintance of his, Edgar (Wellebore Ellis Agar?), who, seeing that something was desperately wrong, refused to leave him, and eventually persuaded him to the refreshment of oysters and Graves, then to the

further refreshment of a pretty little orgy, in which, however, Casanova, who had touched no food for three days, was too weak to take part, an incident which taught him that love is the result, not the cause, of gaiety. Since he now owed Edgar some money, he deferred his suicide to the next day, and was teased to go to Ranelagh. Half-dead, with hazy eyes, he watched the dancers, and then he saw a strangely familiar figure—it was—his mind was wandering—it could not be—she turned her face—yes, it was, not a hallucination, but La Charpillon ! So she was in her death-throes, was she ! The reaction was terrific. Edgar thought that Casanova was about to have a fit ; but in a few minutes he recovered, the lights of Ranelagh, which had seemed dim, now burned brightly, and the Chevalier de Seingalt was himself again.

Still, the whole monstrous affair had broken something in him, his faith, perhaps ; for from that time Casanova, at thirty-eight, felt that he was growing old. True, his morale was somewhat restored by five delightful Hanoverian sisters, who were far from being monsters like La Charpillon, but his spirit was permanently scarred : for the first time he realised in his bones that all flesh was as grass. Nor was the affair quite over. He had the disgusting old procuresses imprisoned for debt (Edgar, who

was more successful with La Charpillon, as Wilkes was to be, redeemed it), and they, having him seized as he was issuing in gala-dress from one of Cornelis's royally attended routs, charged him with attempted disfigurement, an accusation from which he was only dismissed after being bound over on his own and other recognisances, and paying a short but horrid visit to Newgate. The only revenge he took was to train a parrot to shout in French, 'La Charpillon is a wickeder harlot than her mother,' which he offered for sale at fifty guineas on the Stock Exchange.

In the early spring Casanova, checking his resources, found that he was only just solvent. He had spent thousands in England (La Charpillon had cost him more than one), had made up nothing in gambling, and had been unable to engineer a lottery scheme. He must retreat. Selling nearly all his jewelry to pay his debts, he gave up his Pall Mall mansion, and withdrawing to rooms in Greek Street, Soho, prepared to go to Portugal. One day, however, he met an amiable cosmopolitan gentleman who called himself the Baron de Stenau, in company with a still more amiable lady, with whom he gambled, and from whom he won fifty pounds. His opponent could not pay, but gave him a bill for five hundred, which he took to his banker the next day, and

signed on its being accepted. He returned four hundred and fifty pounds to Stenau, made the intimate acquaintance of the lady, and got ready to go. But within a week he found that the lady was not above reproach, and taking to his bed, undertook a month's cure. No sooner had he done so, however, than he received a note from the banker to say that the bill was fraudulent, and that either he must return the money or produce Stenau. Casanova, crawling out of bed, put a brace of pistols in his pocket and went resolutely to ferret out the baron. He had bolted ! Casanova was thus responsible for the forgery, and forgery was a hanging matter. There was only one thing to do—to leave the country within the twenty-four hours allowed him by his banker. But had he the money ? He sold his clothes, which enabled him to refuse the offer his valet made him of his savings and his credit (a touching tribute) ; and making all possible haste to Dover, landed safely at Calais. Farewell to England, inhospitable and fatal ! In eight months, from being the conquering, rich Chevalier de Seingalt, he had departed from it ill, penurious, and sad, a fugitive with a noose about his neck.

## VIII

### THE END OF THE ODYSSEY

(1761-1785)

He was never quite the same man again. Although, thanks to Bragadin and the Comtesse du Romain, he was supplied with money, and maintained his funds by gambling, he was never to be rich any more. His illness was severe, it nearly killed him, and his convalescence was slow. Afterwards his love-affairs multiplied, but there was not the same glamour about them, the animal continued, that was all, and the animal was beginning to fail.

Not that adventures were lacking. First he met Saint Germain, and the master charlatan turned a base coin of his into gold, Casanova being unable to detect the sleight-of hand. At Brunswick, to which he had carried a frolicsome young woman, trouble arose over a bill on Amsterdam. The Jew with whom he negotiated it doubted its validity, and the Duke of Brunswick, bidding Casanova a meaning farewell, seemed to share the broker's suspicions. This was intolerable! Casanova could



not leave, because it would look as though he was expelled by the Duke ; and he could not stay, because it would seem that the Jew was right. So he retired to the neighbouring town of Wolfenbittel, with its magnificent library, where he buried himself in books and manuscripts for a week, studying mainly in and about Homer.

‘I can count this week amongst the happiest of my life,’ he wrote with a flash of self-illumination, ‘for I was not for a moment occupied with myself I thought neither of the past nor of the future, and my mind, absorbed in work, could not be alive to the present I have sometimes thought since then that perhaps the delight of the life of the blessed must be something similar ; and to-day I see that for me to have been in this world a really good and wise man, instead of a real madman, only a combination of petty circumstances would have been necessary , for to the shame of my whole life I must proclaim a truth which my readers will find it hard to believe, namely, that virtue has always seemed to me preferable to vice, and that I have been wicked (when I have been wicked) only from lightness of heart a fact which many will no doubt find reprehensible But what does that matter to me ? Man, in his inward or moral relations, is responsible to himself alone here below, and to God after his death ’

After the Jew, with abject apologies, had honoured the bill on Amsterdam, Casanova made

## THE END OF THE ODYSSEY

his way to Berlin, where he fell in with the younger Calsabigi, still busied in State lotteries. But Frederick the Great, nervous about them, was renouncing that method of raising revenue, and Calsabigi appealed to Casanova for help. Surely Fate itself had sent the genius of lotteries at just the right time to overcome Frederick's doubts. But how to see the King? Luckily Casanova met his old acquaintance Marshal Keith (to whom he gave Saint Germain's piece of transmuted gold), who said, 'Why, write to him, he sees everybody.' Frederick duly appointed a meeting at four o'clock one afternoon in the garden of Sans Souci, and appeared there after his daily flute-playing, with only a reader (a kind of jester) and a spaniel. As soon as the King saw Casanova, he took off his shabby hat, and addressing him by name, shouted at him to say what he wanted. Staggered by this reception, for once Casanova was mute. 'Well,' the King roared, 'speak up! Wasn't it you who wrote to me?' The mention of Lord Keith's name, combined with a compliment, smoothed the scene, and the talk whirled on gardens, on hydraulics, on the naval and military forces of Venice, and finally on finance, upon which Casanova held forth long and ingeniously, but still could not persuade the King to go on with the lottery. At last, as a conclusion, Frederick, looking Casa-

nova up and down with a soldier's appraising eye, said, 'Do you know, you're a very fine figure of a man?' 'Is it possible, sire,' the retort came instantaneously, 'that after a long scientific discussion, your Majesty can see in me the least of the qualities that distinguishes his grenadiers?' The King smiled, he liked Casanova, who soon applied to him for a post. But since after a few weeks he was only offered a paltry tutorship of Pomeranian cadets, he refused the offer; and engaging a rascal as valet because he knew some mathematics, he made for Russia.

But by the time he got to Mitau, extravagance had depleted his funds. However, he entered the town *en grand seigneur*, and delivered a letter of introduction to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Courland, whose wife entertained him, and offered him chocolate. He accepted, and the servant who brought the refreshment was so outstandingly beautiful, that with all his old impetuosity (*sequere Deum*) he slipped the last three ducats he had in the world into her hand. The impulse brought its reward, for the fame of the munificent tip spread so fast that by the evening a Jew had petitioned to lend him money! The Chevalier was once more on his feet. Introduced at Court, some chance remark led the Duke to suppose that his guest was an authority on

mines. Would he inspect his? Well, why not? So Casanova made a three weeks' tour of Courland, threw out common sense suggestions, and writing a report adorned with drawings by his mathematical valet, received an honorarium. Therefore the Chevalier, who seems at this time to have adopted his mother's name of Farussi prefixed with the syllable Count, made a sufficiently striking entry into Riga, and soon after descended upon St Petersburg.

There, though he led his usual life of gambling, gaiety, and love (the salient feature of the last was a young slave whom he bought, and who in jealousy threw plates at his head), his main interest was Catherine the Great. She was strong minded, he decided—her lovers would prove her free from prejudice—but she was not perfidious and cruel, so might be exonerated from the murder or murders attributed to her. She was big, well-built, and without being beautiful, was pleasing. She was gentle and easy, and above all endued with a calm that never abandoned her. She was gracious to Casanova, whom she talked with several times. They criticised the statues in the gardens, and then the talk turned to Frederick, during which Casanova had the opportunity of telling the truth and of flattering the Czarina, by saying that his Prussian

Majesty's great fault was that in conversation he never gave you time to answer his questions. More important, however, was Casanova's suggestion that it looked ill for a modern monarch to continue to use the Old Style in dating : why did she not impose the Gregorian calendar ? Even England had done so lately. At their next meeting she declared that she had undertaken the reform ; that all official letters now bore both dates ; and then there followed a long and learned discourse on chronology, which reflects great credit not only on the Czarina's erudition, but also on Casanova's memory. This part of the memoirs is also embellished by an entertaining dialogue of the dead with Catherine, over her sudden death. It is in the best manner of Fontenelle

Leaving St Petersburg, since he sought no post in a country which he did not like, in 1765 Casanova rattled away to Warsaw. There his flaring adventure was his duel with Count Branicki, the King of Poland's favourite, an affair of honour in which there was the greatest friendliness on both sides. Casanova was always inordinately proud of this duel. He had fought many before, and with his famous direct thrust, lunged home as soon as his adversaries were on guard (one of them complained that he had been

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hit before he was on guard), had always pinked his foe. This affair was with pistols, but what made Casanova so vainglorious was that by fighting with so fine a gentleman he had been tacitly ennobled. Branicki was severely wounded in the stomach, but was able to prevent his infuriated people from killing Casanova, who for his part had his left hand shattered. Seeking sanctuary in a convent, he was attended by doctors who insisted that his wound being gangrenous, he must have his hand amputated. Casanova refused, though his friends implored him to save his life by submitting. He said there was no gangrene. 'It will poison your arm, and you will lose that,' he was told. 'Very well, if it poisons my arm, you may take it off,' he answered. He was irritated by a note from the King (who promised him forgiveness even if Branicki died) expressing wonder at his lack of courage, but still he would not give in, and time proved him right. For although he carried his hand in a sling for months, perhaps for more months than were strictly necessary, it finally healed. As soon as he could get about he found it wise to leave Warsaw for a while, to visit the noblemen who clamoured to invite him, but when he came back he found that rumour had been so sadly rife about him, that the King with-

drew his favour, and virtually ordered him to leave his capital.

So then to Breslau, to Dresden, where he saw his mother, to Leipzig, to Vienna (we are now in 1767), where he renewed acquaintance with Metastasio, but from which he was expelled for gambling, which he had not indulged in (a bitter enemy had trapped him there), in spite of the succour of the great Prince Kaunitz. Then Augsburg, Louisburg, Cologne, Spa, in ever more rapid progression, everywhere meeting old friends, and ever asking for employments which were invariably denied him, and even offering to sell the secret of the transmutation of gold to the son of the Duke of Courland for a trifling sum, which was not sent and finally Paris, where he learned to his bitter regret that his perennial benefactor, Bragadin, was dead. There, offering to fight a nephew of the Marquise d'Urfé who made insulting remarks about him at a concert, he was handed a *lettre de cachet* ordering him to leave at once ; so he made his way to Madrid (on the way to Portugal and Pauline), where on arrival his possession of the *Iliad* in Greek aroused the darkest suspicions of the customs officers

The Spaniards, he found, had more prejudices than any other race, were even more conceited than the English, and hated foreigners. Never-

theless, armed with letters of introduction, he leapt into the good graces of such grandees as the Comte d'Aranda—this time the real one, and so powerful as to be more king than the king—and of other notables. Why had he come? they asked guilelessly. To see if his talents could be of any use to the State. Would his ambassador, Mocenigo, introduce him at Court? Alas, no, he was ill viewed by the Venetian Inquisition. Well then, he might by all means stay to amuse himself in Spain, but he could expect nothing. His case was becoming desperate, he was no longer fortune's darling, and he wrote urgently to Dandolo, Bragadin's friend, imploring him to arrange matters with the Venetian government, and have him recommended to the ambassador.

In the mean time things did not go so badly with him, and he was made hopeful by the behaviour of the ambassador's secretary, the delightful young Count Manucci, who came to call. Manucci? the name seemed familiar. Why, of course, this so-called count was the son of the dastardly spy who had been the instrument of his confinement in the Leads!—the son of a shopkeeper and a servant girl! However, he did not unmask him, and through Manucci's friendship was privately welcomed by Mocenigo, over whom the secretary had compelling influence. Moreover, Casanova was



received everywhere ; his polished manners, and his brilliant, well-informed conversation opened even princely portals And there was Ignazia, the daughter of a hidalgo, who was a cobbler but not a shoemaker, for his nobility would not permit him to stoop so low as to measure the feet of plebeians, though he might mend their leaky slippers Casanova took her to balls, for which, irrepressibly young beau of forty-three, he learned to dance the fandango ; so that the whole made a gracious but not exciting adventure.

Unlike the one which was exciting enough but by no means gracious One day, signalled to walk under a lady's window, a note was dropped at his feet, making an assignation with him that night at a specified door Meticulously toileted, he was there punctually, and, full of expectation, was led, delightedly conscious of perfumes and rustling silks, along a pitch-dark passage. Dolores, so she is named, took his hand, and they entered the dim candlelight of a vast scutcheoned room 'Do you love me? Will you swear to do as I ask you?' she whispered, to be promptly answered 'Yes'; and then Dolores—he noticed she seemed agonised and was trembling—led him to the curtained alcove and, flinging back the hangings, revealed the corpse of a young man lying on the bed ! Dolores had murdered the lover

who had been false to her And since Casanova had sworn to do as she asked, he was forced to carry away the body and slide it into the river behind the house.

Such is the story, but it occurs in only one of the texts, and it is more likely that when, two days later, a stranger warned Casanova that he was about to be arrested, the reason given was the true one, namely, that he was illegally in possession of arms He rushed for refuge to his friend Raphaël Mengs, now painter royal to Charles III, but Mengs was timid, and only harboured him against the grain. Uselessly, for the next day Casanova was dragged off to the prison of Buen Retiro He had never been in such a vile place, in company with such revolting human dregs The atmosphere was greasily foul, there were no tables, and the few camp beds so crawled with vermin that it was impossible to rest on them. Casanova went in continual fear that he would be murdered for his money, for his watch, for anything so for two days and nights he stayed awake, sitting upright in discomfort and dread. Mengs, however, sent him food, and Manucci procured him writing materials, with which he sent four outrageously stinging letters to men in authority, the most vitriolic being reserved for d'Aranda This masterpiece concluded 'Therefore give in-

stant order for my release, or end my torture : you will thus spare me the pains of doing away with myself' And soon he was let out, the confiscated weapons were returned ; and what was more, Mocenigo, acting on instructions, received him openly. Triumph once again !

So his old life went on, gloriously enough. He met all the distinguished people in Madrid, discussing with them mathematics, poetry, philosophy and the arts ; he wrote the libretto of an opera performed at the embassy, and if he once or twice indiscreetly brushed up against the priests, a friendly conversation with the Grand Inquisitor set matters right. Most of all, he interested himself in a plan for colonising a part of the Sierra Morena, and expatiated so well that the authorities concerned provisionally offered him the government of the nascent colony. But then a hideous blow fell. Calling on Manucci one day, he was refused the door ; a note he sent him was returned unopened. He met with similar rebuffs everywhere—at d'Aranda's, at the Prince de la Católica's, at each house where he had been effusively welcomed. He soon discovered why. He had blabbed, inexcusably, about a shameful aspect of Manucci's private life ; and he having told Mocenigo, the ambassador gave out that Casanova was a scoundrel no self-respecting person should

receive. Indeed he had betrayed a friend. He had also souled his own nest.

There was, then, nothing for him to do but to leave Madrid. Not, however, for Portugal, for Pauline had stopped writing to him. He went eastward, to Saragossa, to Valencia, lingering on his way to shed tears over the glorious ruins of Saguntum, for however distressed Casanova might be, the ardent scholar was always awake in him, to Barcelona, where he spent six weeks in prison owing to his old infamous partner Passano betraying his intimacy with the mistress of the Captain General of Catalonia. Another gaoling, however, did not daunt him, and while there he solved mathematical problems, and continued a work he had begun in Madrid, the *Confutation* of Amelot de la Houssaye's inimical history of Venice. Then, on his release, across the frontier, pursued by murderers set on by Manucci, to wander awhile in the smaller towns of southern France, where, although living was cheap, he left a trail of debts rather than a succession of lovers. At Aix he was so ill that the last Sacrament was administered to him, but his life was saved by the devotion of a nurse who quietly appeared. Who had sent her? Nobody knew. At last he discovered who it was. Henriette! whom he had lately had much in mind. They exchanged letters. 'We passed

in the street,' she informed him, 'but you did not recognize me. I have changed a great deal. Not that I have become ugly, but I have grown prematurely fat.' The letter reached him at Marseilles. Should he go back? No. She had told him it would be indiscreet. Perhaps if later . . .

And so the restless journeying went on, with no outward confession of weariness on Casanova's part, though his friends unkindly told him that he looked surprisingly older. But what was the future to be for an ageing man, who yet insisted on being young? Cast out of nearly every capital in Europe, where was he to go? Venice! He was homesick for Venice, with an ever-increasing ache. So as he meandered from place to place—to Naples, where he met Lucrezia and Leonilda; to Rome, where he once more disported himself, though less scandalously, with the Cardinal de Bernis, now French ambassador, and where he encountered Manucci, who insisted that they were friends; to Florence, from which he was expelled for complicity, which he denied, in a gambling plot to fleece Lord Lincoln; to Switzerland—he all the time kept his compass set for his beloved birthplace. As he went, gambling, conversing with philosophers, arguing about poetry, and still making love (though his stories now become less and less convincing),

he wrote and worked, publishing especially the *Confutation* which might restore him to favour. At last, in 1773, after six years of purposeless straying, living meagrely, only occasionally finding something of the old luck and the old gaudiness, he reached Trieste. It was nearly his goal. Finally, in the autumn of 1774, after rendering the State some secret service, he was allowed, to his great joy, to float once more upon the happy canals of which he had never ceased to dream.

It is well to pass hastily, with averted eyes, over the next eight years of his life, during which the sublime adventurer, the meteoric millionaire, the fantastically excessive lover, eked out a mean living as spy to the Inquisition ! Moreover, in the whole of Venice, there was only one poor, faithful shop girl to love him. And it was all to no end. In vain his reports bewailed the shocking immorality of the town, and contained lists of the impious or smutty books owned by his compatriots, his employers complained he never sent them any information worth having, and would give him no reward beyond a wretched pittance. He was, indeed, received at patrician tables, for his conversation was imitabably stimulating, but that led nowhere. He tried to exploit a company of French actors, he started a theatrical magazine of some merit, *Le Messager de Thalie*,

but it failed. He published a series of *Opusculi*, which came to a premature end in a novel, of which he sent a copy to his old bright flame, X C V, Justiniana Wynne, now Comtesse de Rosenberg. He fulminated against the Deism of Voltaire, and he began to translate the *Iliad* of Homer into Italian *ottava rima*, but the venture petered out after eighteen cantos; and finally he compiled a vast work on the troubles in Poland, of which only three out of the seven volumes were printed. He did not thrive, though he was at one time secretary to the Marquis Spinola. 'Either I am not made for Venice, or Venice is not made for me,' he lamented; and at last there was a characteristic explosion. In a quarrel at the house of a nobleman he found himself so placed that either he had to violate hospitality, or own himself a coward, a situation so intolerable that he took his revenge by publishing a scandalous libel on both parties, *Ne Amori, ne Donne*. His book was stopped; friendly houses were closed to him, and it was intimated that there was nothing more for him to do in Venice.

So once more, at fifty-eight, with yellowing teeth, and wearing a chestnut wig, the battered adventurer set off, protesting and poor, into a greying future. He pinned his hope on Paris, especially, for some reason, on d'Alembert; but d'Alembert had just died, and Paris was

dolefully changed. Still, he put up a bold front, mingled with *cognoscenti*, attended meetings of the Academies, but soon left it with his brother François, now painter to the King, to go to Dresden, and thence to Vienna, where François, thanks to Kaunitz, flourished bravely. Giacomo was not so lucky. He did indeed for some time act as secretary to the Venetian ambassador, but it was no life for him, even in old age, still loving as he did to dally with the arts, to make new acquaintances and meet old ones, and to live in the appropriate way. Among his new friends was Da Ponte, of the same kidney as himself, who tells that one day when he was walking with Casanova, the latter, suddenly contorted, ground his teeth, and rushed upon a man across the street, yelling, 'Villain, I have caught you!' It was Costa, the valet who had robbed him of Madame d'Urfé's trunk of valuables. Da Ponte dragged Casanova away, but Costa soon reappeared with a stanza of doggerel verses to the effect that he had, after all, only been Casanova's pupil in theft, and that the latter had better keep mum. Casanova laughed, whispered to Da Ponte 'The rascal's right,' and parted amicably from his old valet, who gave him a cameo ring as the last relic of the marquise's jewels.

And yet, in spite of queer associates, in spite



of his mean position, Casanova was still a figure, still petted by the great, so much so that he conversed with the Emperor, Joseph II, and in no spirit of humility. When the Emperor said, 'I don't think much of people who buy titles,' M de Seingalt innocently asked, 'And what about those who sell them, sire?' But such petty triumphs would not enable a man to live, nor would a work on the quarrel between the Dutch and Venetian Republics—nothing seemed to offer, and the world became, if not flat and stale—it could never be that to Casanova's eager mind—at least unprofitable, for he had lost even his secretaryship when his ambassador died. Then one day, dining with Count Lamberg, his Augsburg friend, he met the young Count Waldstein, whom he fascinated. Waldstein turned the talk upon magic. 'Oh, I know all about that,' Casanova struck in. 'Then come and live with me at Dux,' Waldstein said. 'I'm going back there to-morrow.' But Casanova did not fancy burying himself in the wilds of Bohemia, and for a year he struggled on, went to Berlin to get a post in the Academy, battled against his fate. But at last he accepted Waldstein's offer to become his librarian at a not ignoble salary, coupled with the promise that he would be treated like a gentleman.

IX  
TWILIGHT AT DUX

(1785 1798)

Was the adventure to end at last, at anchor in the library of a petty prince, with the cobwebs and the dust gradually covering over the old decaying body, the mind rusting until the wheels slowed down to a stop? Exile, forgetfulness by the world—the tiger in a cage! Never again would the brilliant Chevalier de Seingalt flash astonishingly through the capitals of Europe, swaggering and irresistible, no more would the faro tables hope or tremble at his approach, Venus Pandemon would for ever lose the most constant, the most arduous of her votaries. Impossible! or at least unthinkable! Could not life be made to conform to desire, as he had said over and over again? And at first, when the Count was in residence, there were gleams, sumptuous dinners with entrancing food, and wines abundant and select, upon which Casanova pounced wolfishly, talk something like the old talk, and balls with the delicious proximity of beauty floating by amid the ravishing perfumes of the

boudoir. Sometimes there were visitors to drink the waters at Teplitz, near by, such as the genially cynical Prince de Ligne, Waldstein's uncle, a great man of the world and man of letters ; and he, or others, or Lorenzo da Ponte, would come to gossip, to listen, to be dazzled, for to the end Casanova was extraordinarily good company, flashing with wit, bubbling over with anecdote, and dropping remarks of a staggering sagacity. Moments of happiness, of illusion, for which the old adventurer was always grateful to Waldstein. But, and it was to be tasted almost at once, there was gall even in the sweet : if there was a crowd at a banquet, the Count's steward, Feltkirchner, who hated him, would thrust him away to a side-table , perhaps rightly, for the society which came was not of his world, nor of his age, and few of them understood the languages he knew. He tried to speak German, they did not understand him, and when he grew angry, they laughed. They laughed when he showed them his French verses, as they laughed at his gesticulations when he declaimed his beloved Ariosto. When he bowed, as Marcel the famous Paris dancing-master had taught him to do on coming into a room, when he danced a minuet in the old stately fashion, when he wore the velvets, the plumes, the buckles which had been the admiration of the

companies he had loved, they laughed again, immoderately 'Cospetto!' he would cry, 'pigs that you are! You're all Jacobins!

It was worse when the Count was away, and the marooned ancient was left to the tender mercies of the steward and his like minded assistants. They could not abide this arrogant stranger who did not speak their language, who seemed hardly to be of the same species as themselves, who grumbled incessantly, and appeared to bark at them, and they took no pains to hide their aversion. Casanova, fretted by an inaction so foreign to his nature, exaggerated little rubs to fantastic proportions, everybody was in conspiracy against him! He became a prey to persecution mania, his nervous potential burst out in terrific rages, and his need for action relieved itself in daily storms. The cook had spoilt his coffee or ruined his macaroni, his soup had, out of pure malice, been served too hot or too cold, the coachman had deliberately given him a poor horse to drive over to Teplitz with, a dog had barked all night, a hunting-horn had driven him crazy, or the priest had been trying to convert him. It was all the steward's doing. Who had suggested that the servant girl should use some of his manuscript to light the fire with? Feltkirchner. Who had told the courier to jostle him at the street corner? Feltkirchner.

And who had incited the same courier to tear his portrait out of a book and paste it up in the privy with obscene comments, if not Feltkirchner? The steward was always setting people against him, even the Count. Why, Waldstein had not said good-morning to him first, had lent some one a book without telling him, had failed to introduce him to a distinguished stranger who had come to see the sword that had pierced the side of Wallenstein, or had not reprimanded a groom who failed to touch his cap to the librarian. Could it be borne? Sometimes it could not; and Casanova would be commanded by God (such was his belief) to obtain letters of introduction from the Prince de Ligne to some ducal potentate, or certain Berlin Jews; and he would slip off secretly, leaving a letter of farewell for the Count, who would laugh and say, 'He'll come back.' But his search for old friends, his attempts to link up with the old life, or with his family, were doomed to disillusion: at Weimar, for instance, all the attention went to a young man called Goethe; there was no life for him outside Bohemia. Thus holding forth against German literature, against the rascality, the superstition, and the ignorance of Berlin Jews (whose money, however, he borrowed and upon whom he drew bills in Waldstein's name), he would creep back after

a few weeks Waldstein laughed, Casanova wept, and said that God had ordered him to return to his chamber at Dux. And then he would delight the company with a ludicrous account of what had happened to him on this last trip.

And after all, as he had been fond of saying, while there is life all is well, so his exhaustless vitality, which could find no release in squabbles with servants, turned to other outlets. The lover, the swashbuckler, the gambling adventurer, took to his pen, and the output was terrific, if dispersed. He would show the world that he was the equal of Voltaire, he would put that charlatan Rousseau in the shade—poetry, politics, mathematics—if he could not shine in these, who could? Thus in 1790 he published his works on the duplication of the cube, with two corollaries on that of the six sided solid, which mathematicians have found sensible if not epoch making, besides thoughts on the Gregorian calendar, he sent the Emperor a *Lucubration on Usury*, a subject on which he undoubtedly knew something, he delivered himself of a long critical essay on Manners, Art, and the Sciences. Roused by detestation of the Jacobins who were laying waste the Pompadour France that he loved, he produced *Reflections on the French Revolution*. And as he sat in the library at Dux,

or in his own room, thinking, writing, dreaming, the fever of scribbling grew upon him. The only way, he found, to prevent black melancholy from eroding his existence or driving him mad, was to blacken paper ten or twelve hours a day. So he wrote and wrote—now projecting a heroic-comic drama, now a musical comedy, or again a tragedy or a mime-ballet; but none of these came to fruition except a dreary play *Polemoscope*, acted at Dux, and *La Lorgnette Menteuse, ou La Calomnie Démasquée*. He was always making notes, jotting down observations, memories, ideas, on scraps of paper, in a handwriting which grew ever shakier, the subjects varying from a philosophic dialogue between himself and God (no less), to notes on the kind of biscuit he best liked soaked in wine. The stupendously numerous large files are encyclopaedic in their variety: it is as though his mind, ungeared from his body, whirled round at ever greater speed. There are scraps of stories—about Roland, about an adventure with women in a cave; there are cryptograms, and a grammatical lottery; there are more snippets of Homer, and there is the *Icosaméron*, a philosophic fantasy, wild but unreadable, for which he got three hundred and thirty-five subscriptions, but of which his bookseller did not sell a copy. There is a work, pretending to be

translated out of English, on the follies of human beings, a *Meditation on Sleep*, a design for discovering a perfect language, a long critique of Bernardin de Saint Pierre, a *Songe d'un Quart d'Heure*, and, in Italian, a treatise on the passions, in fact, the only thing which he seems to have left untouched was his *Dictionary of Cheeses*, which he had once projected, but which he found too large a subject for him. There are stacks of verses in Italian and French, often heavily corrected, and one quatrain in particular which seems to have given him enormous trouble, as well it might, seeing how contrary it is to his own nature

'Sans mystère point de plaisirs,  
Sans silence point de mystère  
Charme divin de mes loisirs  
Solitude ! que tu m'es chère !'

Solitude ! the thing he most hated in the world—so does man deceive himself in the search for happiness

And when philosophy or poetry would no longer bring balm to his irritated nerves, there were letters, not merely the answers he would write to poets, prose writers, men of science, and philosophers who still wrote to him, but more personal ones, to Henriette, to his brother, to the old Countess Waldstein, his patron's mother at Vienna, in which he complained of his treatment by the egregious



Feltkirchner • and then letters to Feltkirchner himself, in which, unconsciously comic, he gave a loose to his rage, grossly, frantically, signing himself the steward's best friend, Jacques Casanova de Scingalt ; and, pricked by the same spur, he dashed off a dialogue with O'Reilly the doctor, full of invective and scathing sarcasms on his ignorance, avarice, and idiotcy. Old age made no difference to the temperamental explosiveness of the Venetian.

These works, with various jottings and maxims, such as considerations on pride, on whether a man who knew no Latin could compose a perfect hexameter, on Italianised French words, would have occupied the whole time and energy of most men ; but these things were mere offshoots, leisure-moment productions, in the intervals of his great work, the *Mémoires*. They would be more than memoirs, they would be confessions, and would have been called such had not ' that charlatan ' seized the title. He had already written a small section of them, published in a private edition for his friends, *My Escape from Prison*, but this had been done in self-defence. For he was often asked to tell the story, and could not refuse, for fear of being thought churlish ; but it took two hours to do justice to it, and talking at length was becoming difficult, for how can one talk without teeth,

and the superb set, with which he had delighted to crack ship's biscuits, had decayed to nothing. That, however, was merely a story, an adventure, there was little room for the mind, the soul even, to have play, but in these confessions everything would be there. He would tell the truth, for truth, he declared, was the one constant passion of his life, and it would be the truth about himself by a man who understood his own nature—*Nequidquam sapit qui sibi non sapit*. He would not spare himself. 'I have committed many follies in my time,' he wrote, 'I confess it with as much openness as Rousseau, but I am not so vain about them as that unhappy gentleman is.' Yes, it would be candid, extremely frank indeed, and therefore it could not fail to be morally useful. Not that he himself had erred much, he thought, the only deed for which he felt remorse was his careless betrayal of Manucci, but he would abundantly reveal the crimes of other people.

Moreover, would it not be instructive to the tolerant—and he addressed himself to these alone—to have before them the portrait of a man who had always done as he wished, lived according to impulse? And if some of his pictures might seem too precisely, too vividly painted, well, prudes might miss them out, and if, on the other hand, it should happen that such scenes inflamed the ardours of some of his

readers, again, well, he could wish them nothing better. The book, of course, would have a Preface ; he would introduce himself to his readers before he talked to them ; it would be a résumé of his philosophy. He tried several openings, especially one in which he endeavoured to relate himself to the universe ; but little by little throwing out the costive philosophy, he made the Preface into a work of art, graceful, winning, and, surely, irresistible. It is none the less a confession—his confession of faith ; and it gave him great difficulty, for however eager one may be for truth, it is hard to be exact in stating one's belief about first and last things. He wrote it again and again, the last draft being revised, it seems, just before his death.

‘ There is not one Giacomo Casanova, there are a hundred ’—and even in this Preface, where the man tried with all the concentration of purpose he could muster to create a unity, several people seem to jostle in it, and exclaim : *Nequidquam sapit* . . . but there were so many people to know . the man who believed in God, knowing that he had prayed to Him, yet who believed also in destiny , the Christian who believed in immortality, but not that he would survive death. Nevertheless one Casanova emerges clearly, the man who had loved life, and all the things in it that had tasted strong—

dried cod, high game, cheeses in a state of putrefaction, spiced wines, and, he adds without a pause, the perfume of women. And if the taste may seem gross to some, he says defiantly, I can afford to laugh at them, for all I know is that I have enjoyed life the more for these things. Enjoyment—premeditated and remembered—was it not for this that man had faculties higher than those of the beasts? To enjoy life thoroughly, sensually, was to fulfil the purposes of nature, which had made man sentient. It is odd that in his Preface he does not touch upon his intellectual pleasures perhaps it is that the memory of those fades, one cannot in imagination relive them as one can those of the body, for that was where Casanova was sentimental. He did not excuse his way of life, he saw no need for excuses. He told his story for his semblables to read, they might be few, but they were the only ones he cared for.

And, ultimately, what was he writing the book for at all? Perhaps he would burn it before he died. He was scribbling it to live again his old pleasures, and that he did to some extent do so is obvious from the nervous warmth of the whole. There was fun in telling the truth (with the few omissions he felt he had a right to make), but the real delight was to turn over his innumerable notes, the scraps he had jotted down, such as his conversations with

Voltaire, and the letters he had kept, those, for instance, from Manon Balletti, which Esther d'O had given him back. Yes, it seems as though in remembering he did renew his youth. The old mangy tiger once more became the splendid beast, burning bright. He forgot his aches, his impotence, the insults of Feltkirchner. After all, all life, all enjoyment, is memory. We do not live, we have lived. And what a life he had led! memories of which brought back all the old love of it. They were fools who said that life was not worth living, that there was no happiness in it; they were criminal fools who committed suicide.

So now he worked continuously, he would leap out of his bed to write and to rewrite, revising all the while, it might even be said, he told one of his still numerous correspondents, that he wrote while he slept, for he dreamt of his book. Even when he went for walks the business of composition went on. The children who saw the tall, gaunt figure stalking along the streets would scatter and flee at his approach, for it was not merely his bony face, brown as a Moor's, that frightened them, his receding forehead, his still lambent eyes that gazed before him in such fixity, but the torrent of words that came from his bitter lips, now a mouthing, now a passionate outburst; a lonely melancholy figure, with a monstrous reputation

behind him, who seemed to be communing with spirits. It was not only the children who got out of his way.

And then, when the work was about half-done, the itch to publish came upon him, upon the man who had stated so roundly that nothing should appear till after his death. Portions of his memoirs were read by his friends, especially by the Prince de Ligne, who, delighted with his frankness, his refusal to glose over details, urged him to make them known. The Prince was no more shocked by the unhampered picture of humanity than he was by the Italianised French, and besides, he recognised in it a superb picture of the baroque aspect of the society of the whole of Europe, filled with a delightful philosophy, crammed with vignettes of social life, stocked with sketches of people both famous and infamous, and which read like a masterpiece in the picaresque. Casanova hesitated no longer, and sent one volume of the manuscript to Count Marcolini at Dresden for him to print, saying that the success or failure of the book would determine him whether to continue or to burn. Marcolini, however, serious, dignified, prudent, and first minister to the King of Saxony, was afraid. The words Casanova used were too blunt, too many people still living were mentioned, he refused.

Perhaps it was this disappointment that made Casanova ill, brought him face to face with the only really disagreeable thing about life—death. But indeed his imprudences were finding him out in the shape of an incurable disease, for such in those days was considered trouble of the prostate gland. He was looked after by a nephew and by a blue-stocking lady, Élise von der Reche, who for a last pleasure brought him Malesherbes' daughter as a visitor. Casanova knew he was dying: his book was finished only up to 1774, so he burnt most of the remainder of the rough notes. He realised that his *Mémoires* were a work of art, the most complete revelation of a human being ever penned, and was determined that nothing imperfect should come from his hand. It was on June 4th, 1798, that the unrepentant old pagan died, rich in his memories, reluctant to leave them. His last words have all the old effrontery, all the old sense of the dramatic, the same queer tang of belonging to the hero of a novel that distinguishes all his life: 'I have lived as a philosopher,' he murmured, 'I die as a Christian.'

For a long time his grave was lost: how should a fairy have a grave? Only a legend remained that the metal cross which had surmounted it used to entangle the skirts of girls as they went to church. Research, however,

has cast a cruder light, his grave, and even his bones have been found, and these last have been only recently disturbed to be carried to, and honourably buried in, that Venice which he had so fruitlessly loved, and which during his life had consistently rejected him



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